The Nation.

GEORGE TENET'S EVASIONS
David Corn

YELTSIN'S (REAL) LEGACY
Katrina vanden Heuvel

NETROOTS BITE BLUE DOGS
Ari Melber

GIVING VETERANS THE SHAFT
An Exchange

THE GENIUS OF CÉSAR VALLEJO
Roberto González Echevarría

MAY 21, 2007
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CORRECTING SCHOOLS

EVALUATING
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND
PEDRO NOGUERA VELMA L
COBB DEBORAH MEIER

BIRTH DATE
MONTH DAY YEAR
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL

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E F G H I J

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FEMALE
MALE

GRADE OR EDUCATION

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EXCHANGE

R.O. BLECHMAN

Uncle Sam Adds Insult to Injury

Needham, Mass.

■ Thank God someone has finally lifted the curtain on the appalling practice of tagging injured veterans with "personality disorder" to avoid giving them VA care. The unconscionable, revolting, self-serving weasel words from the military bureaucrats make one's blood boil [Joshua Kors, "How Specialist Town Lost His Benefits," April 9]. How do we get this to the larger stage? It needs to be exposed as a *massive* scandal. Any decent person would share my reaction: white-hot rage. JOHN BONAVIA

Princeton, NJ

■ I was so sickened by Joshua Kors's article that I had nightmares. PETER HECKMAN

Ann Arbor, Mich.

■ How ironic that our soldiers are being cheated out of their military benefits and healthcare with the use of a specious diagnosis of personality disorder. Their Commander in Chief suffers from a classic case (DSM-IV-TR criteria for antisocial personality disorder: disregard for the rule of law, lying, impulsive behavior, hostility, financial irresponsibility, reckless disregard for safety and lack of remorse), but this doesn't seem to disqualify *him* from anything. REBECCA HATTON, PSYD

Brooklyn, NY

■ I'm thinking, since it's obvious that our President suffers from personality disorder, and since (most of) the voters were not aware of this condition when he was elected, it would be appropriate to strip him of his job, his insurance and his benefits. He should also be required to use his elite family's bank accounts to reimburse the country the billions he has stolen from it, including Specialist Town's $15,000. A couple of years in a cage with a hood over his head listening to the Dixie Chicks turned up to 11 would be nice, too. JIM MCKAY

Kyoto

■ What personality disorders are these VA and Army doctors diagnosing? Each disorder has different diagnostic criteria. Borderline personality disorder? Paranoid personality disorder? Antisocial personality disorder? Narcissistic personality disorder? Schizotypal personality disorder? It is not possible for *any* reputable psychiatrist to diagnose a person with "personality disorder" as such. MARK RICHARDSON

St. Paul

■ To blame a combat veteran's posttraumatic stress symptoms on a pre-existing "personality disorder" is as logical as blaming the traumatic amputations of a veteran's limbs on the pre-existing condition of being made of flesh that is susceptible to penetration by shrapnel and explosives. ALFORD S. KARAYUSUF

Benton, Kans.

■ The idea that a traumatic event could release a "dormant" personality disorder, as apparently Colonel Knorr believes, is perhaps the most ignorant statement I have ever heard about such things in the thirty-plus years I have been in the mental health business. Just doesn't happen, and by definition, can't happen. DOUGLAS E. MOULD, PHD

Boise, Idaho

■ Specialist Town did not lose his benefits. They were stolen from him. To validate a "pre-existing personality disorder" diagnosis, it would be necessary to go back and study the person before he or she entered the service. Sorry, but that is seldom done or even possible. TOM EDGAR
Retired licensed psychologist

Providence, RI

■ As professors of psychiatry who have more than thirty years' combined experience treating military veterans from all conflicts from World War I to Iraq and Afghanistan, we applaud your focus on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its misdiagnoses. The article raises a harrowing subject—the misdiagnosis and dismissal from the military of psychiatrically wounded war veterans.

Joshua Kors reports that one military mental health clinician claims that "traumatic experiences can trigger a condition that has lain dormant for years" and thus produce a "personality disorder," which is then grounds for dismissal from military service without disability benefits. There is no scientific evidence to support this statement—in fact, a personality disorder, by definition, cannot lie dormant for years. Rather, there are grounds to be concerned that PTSD will be at least as common in Iraq veterans as in Vietnam veterans. There are further grounds to be concerned that the diagnosis and clinical course of veterans with PTSD will frequently be complicated by closed head injury due to injury from improvised explosive devices. To misdiagnose such disorders as personality disorders is at best incompetent, and at worst scandalous.

The US military death toll and the number of wounded have been carefully documented and extensively reported. But in our society, mental disorders are stigmatized—ignored, minimized and brushed aside. Psychiatric casualties are the silent wounds of war, no less serious and no less chronic than its physical wounds. Kors's article makes this abundantly clear, and makes clear as well the stigma that haunts even men and women who have suffered indescribably dangerous conditions. MARK S. BAUER, MD
M. TRACIE SHEA, PHD

Ogunquit, Me.; York, Me.

■ As mental health professionals we were particularly disturbed by evidence that strongly suggests diagnoses made for military convenience and not in the best interest of the patient. We would like to suggest a type of intervention. Complaints can be filed against the practitioners in question with the licensing boards and professional organizations to which they belong. The filing of such complaints is usually not difficult and typically is without expense. Mental health professionals who engage in unethical practice, including malpractice, are not immune from complaints filed this way.

The benefits of filing a successful complaint would be significant. Not only would it provide a sense of satisfaction and vindication for the GI, it would send a message to military health professionals that they are still bound by ethical practice guidelines. In addition, disciplinary measures, which could include loss of license, would follow these practitioners into civilian practice. Thus a strong and chilling message could lead to a return to professional practice, not "military convenience practice." This would be a more productive way to "support the troops." HERBERT J. HOFFMAN, PHD
HENRY GUERTIN-OUELETTE, PHD
EUGENE GLICK, MD

Sedona, Ariz.

■ I'm a brown shoe Army vet and I'm ashamed, angry and damn angry. The way I see it, those folks made a promise to risk their lives for us, and in return we promised to take care of them if they got hurt. Well, they didn't break their promise. But we did. BYRON MCKEOWN

Crystal Lake, Ill.

■ I am a veteran, my brother is a veteran and my son is a veteran, and I am outraged. The good news is that a veterans' advocate, such as a Disabled American Veteran Representative, can file that veteran's claim and beat that designation. Unfortunately the re-enlistment code and reason for discharge cannot be removed except by a board of that branch of service. This requires a petition, then a long wait with few positive results. If you think that's infuriating, I have seen the personality disorder designation

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PRINTED MAY 2 VOLUME 284, NUMBER 20

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EDITORIALS

Showdown on the War

It is a brutal irony for George W. Bush that the fourth anniversary of his May 1, 2003, appearance in flight-suit drag before a banner declaring his Iraq War a "Mission Accomplished" falls on the week he is battling Congress for another $100 billion to keep the United States in a fight that has now lasted longer than the country's involvement in World War II. Congressional leaders who want Bush to acknowledge the failure of his mission would do well to recall another date: October 10, 2002, when House Democratic leader Dick Gephardt asserted that legislation authorizing Bush to dispatch troops to Iraq, which Gephardt had helped draft, would actually avert war by showing Saddam Hussein a united front. Three years later, Gephardt, along with current presidential contender John Edwards, made another declaration: "It was a mistake.… I was wrong."

That mistake—in which Congress allowed the Administration to manipulate intelligence and play on the fears of Americans after 9/11 to attack a country that posed no threat to the United States—cost Gephardt the trust of his caucus and its grassroots supporters. It also paved the way for his successor, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who voted against the 2002 authorization and who, with Senate majority leader Harry Reid, is now involved in high-stakes negotiations with Bush over whether any constraints will be placed on the President's perpetual warmaking. The soft benchmarks and timid timeline for withdrawal that Bush promptly vetoed was not the clearly defined exit strategy that Senator Russ Feingold, several Democratic presidential candidates and leading members of the Out of Iraq Caucus in the House, along with this magazine, have advocated. In fact, it's a slower exit than the American people want, as evidenced by numerous recent polls. Rarely have the stars of principle and prudent politics been so favorably aligned, and yet, as we go to press, Congress seems poised to capitulate to the demands of an unpopular President.

Perhaps recognizing that its hand was weak, in the runup to the veto Bush's executive branch refused to negotiate in good faith with an equal branch of government, instead coordinating a campaign of character assassination. The White House sent out press releases on the taxpayers' dime with statements like "House of Representatives votes for failure in Iraq." Presidential aides referred to Pelosi and Reid as "defeatists" who would neglect troops in the field—despite the fact that the vetoed legislation would have given Bush every penny he is seeking plus an extra $4 billion (even worse, gaping loopholes in the bill would have allowed continued funding for an estimated 125,000 contractor mercenaries now in Iraq and for tens of thousands of soldiers to remain indefinitely as trainers of Iraqi security forces, which are riddled with militia death squads).

Reid, an ex-boxer, has been aggressive and refreshingly blunt in arguing that "this war is lost" and that Iraq will never be stabilized if Congress lets Bush continue on his chosen course. It is the duty of Congress to check and balance the White House, especially when a President refuses to recognize the futility and mounting cost of an illegal war and occupation overwhelmingly opposed by the Iraqi people. Democratic leaders must recognize that they have already compromised too much. In the face of crude and dishonest Administration-driven attacks, Pelosi and Reid must not back down. To blink now would put Democratic leaders on a road to future admissions of a mistake as serious as Gephardt's—and every bit as disastrous for our Republic, which functions well only when warmaking Presidents are held in check by a courageous Congress.

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COMMENT

The Nation.

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2007 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions**. Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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George Tenet's Evasions

In October 2002, as Congress was about to vote to grant George W. Bush the authority to invade Iraq, Democratic Senator Carl Levin forced the CIA to declassify intelligence analyses indicating it was unlikely that Saddam Hussein would strike the United States with unconventional weapons or share such arms with anti-American terrorists. But CIA director George Tenet undermined the political punch of this disclosure by stating publicly that the CIA's view was not inconsistent with Bush's claim that Iraq posed an immediate and direct WMD threat. Moreover, Tenet's CIA at the same time revealed there had been "senior level contacts" between Iraq and Al Qaeda. This suggested that Saddam was in league with the 9/11 murderers. Unmentioned was that CIA analysts had concluded there was no evidence of significant ties between Baghdad and Osama bin Laden. With this misleading disclosure, Tenet helped Bush grease the way to war.

As Tenet recounts this episode in his new book, *At the Center of the Storm*, he concedes he was wrong to have bent to a request from National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice to issue this public comment. But he neglects to mention release of the intelligence that appeared to link Saddam to Al Qaeda. Here's the Tenet formula in a nutshell: Accept some blame while blaming others and sidestepping inconvenient matters.

Tenet acknowledges that the CIA failed to act on pre-9/11 leads and botched the WMD issue. But he ducks a critical charge: He and his agency disregarded warning signs about the WMD intelligence that was being oversold by the White House. For instance, Tenet downplays questions raised within the agency about the credibility of Curveball—the fabricator who claimed Iraq had mobile bioweapons labs—and ignores previously disclosed e-mails that document this internal debate.

It's hard to tell the unvarnished truth about oneself (and one's agency); it's easier to do so about others. And Tenet does unload. He notes that the Administration never seriously considered options other than full-scale war on Iraq and that it did not ponder the implications of "what would come next." Its prewar WMD rhetoric, he writes, "seemed considerably ahead of the intelligence we had been gathering," and the Administration ignored prewar assessments of troubles that could arise following an invasion. Tenet also shows how calamitous postinvasion decisions were not rigorously discussed before being implemented.

This is a profound indictment, but Tenet never faults Bush. He aims mostly at Vice President Cheney and the neocons. Cheney, Tenet notes, made claims about Iraq's WMDs that were not even supported by the CIA's overstated intelligence. On one occasion Tenet had to kill an over-the-top Cheney speech on the unproven Al Qaeda–Iraq connection. Before and after the invasion, the neocons relentlessly promoted Ahmad Chalabi, a controversial Iraqi exile and schemer, as the solution to whatever the problem of the moment was. Condoleezza Rice was "remote," did little in response to pre-9/11 warnings and failed to broker Iraq policy in an effective manner. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld was out of touch with reality on Iraq. Tenet also slams David Kay, whom Tenet hired to lead the WMD search in postinvasion Iraq. Kay's

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COMMENT

crime? Not leaving his post quietly but instead telling the press and Congress that there were no WMDs to be found. In all this, Bush, inexplicably, is blameless.

Tenet's book is gripping (thanks to co-author Bill Harlow, a novelist and former CIA spokesman). But it's self-serving and partial. Tenet never holds himself fully accountable for his prime mistake: not paying sufficient attention to prewar questions about both the WMD intelligence and the postinvasion planning and not speaking out about his and the Administration's multiple failures until now (when he is making millions of dollars with his mea-quasi-culpa). All his explaining and blaming cannot cover up an undeniable fact: Tenet was not merely at the center of a disastrous storm; he helped to create it. DAVID CORN

Yeltsin's (Real) Legacy

Boris Yeltsin, who died April 23, was a towering figure in Russian history, but was he, as so many US obituaries and editorials have maintained, the "Father of Russian Democracy"? As though afflicted with historical amnesia, most American commentators seem to have forgotten that it was Mikhail Gorbachev who, upon becoming Soviet leader in 1985, launched the democratic reforms he called *glasnost* and *perestroika*—ending censorship; permitting, even encouraging, opposition rallies; holding the country's first free, multi-candidate elections, whose chief political beneficiary was Yeltsin himself; and beginning the marketization and privatization of the Soviet state economy. In short, by 1989 Gorbachev had ended the seventy-year Communist, or "totalitarian," dictatorship in Soviet Russia.

Gorbachev's reforms provided Yeltsin with an opportunity unique in Russian history. In June 1991—when he was elected president of Soviet Russia in what remains perhaps the most free and fair presidential election the country has ever had—and again in August 1991, when he stood, iconically, on a tank to face down an attempted coup against Gorbachev by Communist hard-liners, Yeltsin could have become the co-founder of Russian democracy.

But if Yeltsin was any kind of reformer, it was in the undemocratic tradition of Peter the Great, that imposer of Westernizing changes from above to whom Yeltsin often compared himself. As a result, he quickly squandered—even betrayed—that historic opportunity. After August 1991 Yeltsin's rule-by-decree polarized, embittered and impoverished his country, laying the groundwork for what is now unfolding in Russia—though it is being blamed solely on the current president, Vladimir Putin.

What follows is a quick tour of nearly ten years of Yeltsin's politics and policies. All of them were carried out in the name of "democracy," but they served only to discredit that form of government in Russia. And it should be remembered that they were enthusiastically supported by Washington and our mainstream media as "democratic and market reforms."

§ In December 1991 Yeltsin and a small band of associates suddenly, without any legal or practical preparation or consultation with the parliaments or peoples involved, abolished the Soviet Union. Even if it needed to be dissolved, Yeltsin did it, as even his supporters later acknowledged, in a way that was neither legitimate nor democratic. As Stephen F. Cohen wrote last year in *The Nation*, the breakup was "a profound departure from Gorbachev's commitment to social consensus and constitutionalism" and represented a return to the country's czarist and Bolshevik tradition of imposed change from above.

§ In early 1992 Yeltsin launched disastrous "shock therapy" economic measures. Promoted by a group of US (primarily Harvard) economists, supported by the Clinton Administration and cheered by the US media, the "therapy" was the abrupt elimination of most price controls, which, through hyperinflation, wiped out the savings of most Russians, plunging them into poverty.

§ In October 1993, locked in a bitter dispute with legislators over those economic policies, Yeltsin used tanks to destroy not only the Parliament, which had brought him to power and defended him during the attempted 1991 coup, but the entire constitutional order of Russia's post-Communist republic. The US government and media, with few exceptions, again acted as Yeltsin's cheerleaders as he smashed the country's first-ever popularly elected, fully independent legislature. Few of those US officials or commentators seemed to understand or care that the "democrat" Yeltsin was destroying Russia's best chance in history to create a legislative branch capable of offsetting the nation's centuries-long tradition of unchecked executive power. That attack on Parliament led to the Russian super-presidency and obedient Parliament of today.

§ In December 1994 Yeltsin launched, also by decree, a war against the tiny breakaway republic of Chechnya. By the time it ended in a temporary truce in 1996, the campaign had killed tens of thousands of civilians, made a mockery of constitutional federalism and earned the horrifying distinction of being the first civil war to take place in a nuclearized country.

§ In 1996 Yeltsin's re-election campaign—financed by a handful of men who had profited greatly from his "privatization" policies and aided by pro-Kremlin media and censorship—was marked by spectacular legal violations. No less enduring in its consequences was the next stage of privatization, the most aggressive giveaway on Yeltsin's watch: the notorious "loans for shares" agreement, which allowed a small group of men to take control of the country's most valuable assets in exchange for funding Yeltsin's campaign. Out of this came the rapacious oligarchy, leading one Russian journalist to remark recently that Yeltsin was not "the father of democracy" but "the father of the oligarchy."

§ In August 1998 Yeltsin's government, after pledging not to, devalued the ruble, defaulted on its debts and froze bank accounts. People's savings were once again expropriated, further discrediting democracy and wounding a fragile middle class.

NATION NOTES

We're proud to announce that Stuart Klawans, *The Nation*'s film critic since 1988, has received the 2007 National Magazine Award for reviews and criticism. The NMA judges said, "Klawans brings a fan's passion and a far-ranging intellect to his witty writing about film. From high culture to low, his reviews…make us excited about the movies all over again."

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COMMENT

Such events help explain why, for most Russians, Yeltsin's rule was an age of blight and despair, not reform. None of the enduring antidemocratic consequences of those events, however, have caused Yeltsin's legions of American media boosters to do any explicit rethinking. While many of the obituaries in newspapers that were Yeltsin's most uncritical supporters did give a somewhat balanced appraisal of his years in power, none of them acknowledged their own role in promoting the developments they now criticize. Not surprisingly, those obituaries place the blame elsewhere, insisting that Yeltsin's handpicked successor, Vladimir Putin, destroyed Yeltsin's legacy. In reality, the de-democratization of Russia we have witnessed since Yeltsin left office on New Year's Eve 1999 *is* his legacy. KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

The Chutzpah Industry

Alan Dershowitz is at it again: First he tried to get California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to stop the University of California Press (UCP) from publishing a book highly critical of him, and now he's trying to get DePaul University to deny tenure to the author. The object of his fury? Norman Finkelstein, with whom Dershowitz has been feuding for years. The subject? Israel, of course.

Dershowitz has been telling anyone who will listen, as well as many who didn't ask, that Finkelstein's book *Beyond Chutzpah*—published by UCP in 2005 despite Dershowitz's efforts—is "wholly illegitimate" and "part of a conspiracy to defame" him. (In his book Finkelstein called Dershowitz's *The Case for Israel* "among the most spectacular academic frauds ever published on the Israel-Palestine conflict." For more, see my "Giving Chutzpah New Meaning," July 11, 2005. Disclosure: A *Nation* editor served as a freelance editor of *Beyond Chutzpah.*)

In the fall, before their vote on tenure for Finkelstein, members of the DePaul political science department received an unsolicited packet from Dershowitz containing his "dossier of Norman Finkelstein's most egregious academic sins, and especially his outright lies, misquotations, and distortions." This kind of intervention in a tenure case is virtually unprecedented. It's one thing to have over-the-top debates, especially on Israel and Palestine; we call that freedom of speech. But it's another thing when one of the parties tries to get the other one fired and publication of his book stopped—we call that illegitimate interference.

The procedures governing tenure review require that department chairs solicit evaluations by outside experts in the field. Freelance submissions by declared enemies are pretty much unheard of. DePaul's Faculty Governance Council objected to Dershowitz's intervention and, according to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, voted unanimously in November to write to administrators at both DePaul and Harvard, where Dershowitz teaches, expressing "the council's dismay at Professor Dershowitz's interference in Finkelstein's tenure and promotion case." Michael Budde, chair of DePaul's political science department, told the *New York Times* that Dershowitz's campaign "shows no respect for the integrity of our process and institution."

Tenure votes are among the most carefully guarded secrets in the academy, but not in this case. In separate meetings, both the political science department and a committee of the college voted to give Finkelstein tenure. The department vote, according to *The Chronicle*, was 9 to 3, and the College Personnel Committee's was 5 to 0. The confidential departmental report, according to *The Chronicle*, concluded that "while not all members of the department share a love of polemic and inflammatory rhetoric as practiced by Norman and his adversaries, there is clearly a substantial and serious record of scholarly production and achievement." But Charles Suchar, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, recommended against tenure. In what *The Chronicle* called "language similar to that used by Mr. Dershowitz," the dean wrote, "I find the personal attacks in many of Dr. Finkelstein's published books to border on character assassination and, in my opinion, they embody a strategy clearly aimed at destroying the reputation of many who oppose his views."

Among the numerous comments on the case, the most thoughtful come from University of Chicago historian Peter Novick, who has written the definitive book on the history of US Holocaust commemoration (see my "Holocaust Creationism," July 12, 1999). He's been a sharp critic of Finkelstein's writing, declaring that many of the assertions in Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* are "pure invention" and calling the book "a twenty-first century updating of 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.'" But Novick objects to the way Dershowitz portrayed him—as an ally in the campaign to block Finkelstein's tenure.

At Dershowitz's suggestion, the political science chair asked Novick for "the clearest and most egregious instances" of Finkelstein's malfeasance. Novick replied that while inviting outside opinions on a candidate for tenure was common, soliciting "the dirt" was totally improper, and he wouldn't satisfy such a request. Novick then published key parts of his letter in *The Chronicle* to

CALVIN TRILLIN

ANOTHER EXASPERATING ACCOUNT OF THE BUNKER

So who ever thunk
That Tenet's "slam dunk"
Was really the chunk
Of intelligence junk
That got our boys sunk
In quagmire gunk?
But he, with no spunk,
Stayed mum, like a punk,
And helped sell this bunk
'Til all went kerplunk,
And then packed his trunk.
Like Powell, he's shrunk.

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COMMENT

publicly disassociate himself from Dershowitz's tactics.

"*Of course* Finkelstein's work—like that of all of us—is 'flawed,'" Novick wrote. The question, he said, is "whether, on balance, the positive contribution of the totality of his scholarly work outweighs its faults." His own published criticisms of Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* "reflect my values, my sensibility, who I am…but I don't confuse those criticisms with holy writ." Novick then appealed for "pluralism" in the academy: "There are those who relish the adversarial role, who delight in combat, whose greatest joy is in advancing a cause… such people are often inclined to stretch evidence to the breaking point, and occasionally beyond…. Professor Finkelstein seems to be of that number, as does Professor Dershowitz." That was not his own style, Novick said. While it would be "disastrous," he wrote, "to have a university composed exclusively of people like Finkelstein and Dershowitz," it would be "equally undesirable to have a university composed exclusively of people like me."

Finally, Novick wrote that "Dershowitz's highly publicized intervention has, it seems to me, made it impossible for DePaul to reject Finkelstein's bid for tenure without everyone concluding that DePaul had capitulated to Dershowitz's bullying." If the administration denied him tenure on legitimate scholarly grounds, he said, they'd have to live with the fallout.

Novick told me that he thinks Finkelstein and Dershowitz "deserve each other." But he added that "it's not Finkelstein who's threatening Dershowitz's employment." DePaul's final decision, to be made by the university president, is expected in June.

JON WIENER

Jon Wiener, a Nation *contributing editor, teaches history at the University of California, Irvine, and is the author of* Historians in Trouble.

Dems Tangled in Netroots

"To clarify, Rep. Tauscher is not a blue dog." The emphatic one-line e-mail, dashed off by a spokesman for California Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher, is one of the first signs that a new coalition of unions and Internet activists has gotten the Democratic Party's attention. Tauscher has long been a probusiness voice and outspoken member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition. Yet recently her conservatism—from supporting the GOP bankruptcy bill to airing her concern that liberals might run Congressional leaders "over the left cliff"—has put her in the cross hairs of an effort to reform the Democratic Party from the bottom up. She was branded a "top offender" on the website of Working For Us, a new political action committee pressing Democratic incumbents to support "economic security," a "living wage for all workers" and a "progressive political agenda." Breaking sharply with the posture of most progressive organizations, the group will not simply criticize Democrats who fail that test. It will try to end their careers.

Working For Us was founded by, among others, veteran labor strategist Steve Rosenthal, and it's backed by unions, such as the Teamsters, Steelworkers and SEIU, that traditionally cultivate close relationships with Democratic politicians. But Working For Us is following the confrontational approach of top liberal bloggers, promising primaries to depose disloyal incumbents. Rosenthal says the group is a "marriage of the grassroots and the netroots," uniting door-to-door organizers, unions and bloggers in an effort to "change the tenor of politics."

The strategy is set by two boards made up of traditional labor leaders like SEIU secretary-treasurer Anna Burger and pioneers from the Internet left like MoveOn.org heads and Markos Moulitsas, founder of the top Democratic blog Daily Kos. Moulitsas has spent years fanning grassroots opposition to Democratic incumbents once considered untouchable. He rallied national support for Ciro Rodriguez's 2006 primary challenge to Henry Cuellar, a Texas Congressman who supports estate tax repeal, free trade and George W. Bush, whom he endorsed in 2000. (Cuellar squeaked through the primary with 53 percent and went on to re-election.)

Moulitsas often hammers on three faults of conservative Democrats: economic conservatism, disloyalty to the party and desertion of their home districts' priorities. In a recent blog entry making the case against Tauscher, for example, he highlighted that she "consistently undermined the Democratic Party," led the charge for the Republican bankruptcy bill and "acts like she represents Utah while serving in a 59 percent Kerry district."

The district's presidential voting history may sound more like political trivia than cause for revolt, but it's actually a crucial prerequisite for netroots primary challenges. None of the incumbents targeted by the blogosphere in the last cycle hail from vulnerable districts or red states; they are all Democrats who are disloyal to the caucus and vote more conservatively than their constituents. Working For Us is adopting the same strategic standard to select its targets.

The group says it will challenge only those Democrats who are out of touch with constituents, not antilabor incumbents in antilabor areas. "How do you put some backbone into Democrats so they begin to act the right way?" asks Rosenthal. By confronting them with the reality that their constituents prefer strong economic populists over meek incumbents, he argues. Rosenthal says he will "stir the pot" in more than fifteen districts next year, coordinating outreach, media and blog campaigns, and officially challenge two or three Democratic incumbents. While the group says it is too early to finalize its targets, Moulitsas told *The Nation* he wants to unseat Al Wynn, a Maryland Democrat who has backed Republican legislation on bankruptcy, oil drilling, flag burning, Terri Schiavo and the estate tax, along with Representatives Tauscher and Cuellar. Rosenthal argues that they do not have to win any races to be effective. "The primary is not the victory; the victory is getting Democrats to act like Democrats," he says.

Win or lose, the effort has already drawn sharp criticism from party strategists and activists, including some labor leaders. AFSCME president Gerald McEntee recently attacked Working For Us at a Congressional retreat, declaring, "In blue America, there's no room for PACs to chase vulnerable members they have differences with." The trial lawyers association, another powerful Democratic-leaning interest group, withdrew from the Working For Us coalition once its focus on primaries became clear. Rosenthal says he has fielded complaints from House majority

(Continued on Page 24)

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SCENES FROM HELL

Lynn Randolph

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The Post-Imus Conundrum

If you were under the impression that Don Imus's departure from CBS radio and MSNBC TV would usher in a new era of socially responsible talk on TV and radio, well, think again. What did Imus in was the fact that Ryan Chiachiere, a young analyst at Media Matters, noticed his "nappy-headed ho's" comment from the show's simulcast on MSNBC and then prepared a blog post about it for his organization's website. A flood of calls to MSNBC and the National Association of Black Journalists' demand for an apology combined with twenty-four-hour cable culture to create a mushroom cloud over CBS and NBC and a full-blown public relations crisis for Imus's corporate overlords.

Imus's racism and homophobia have inspired protests for decades. And while many more people got involved this time—particularly black journalists—the crucial factor was the avalanche of exiting advertisers. Remember the sequence. First came the apologies and condemnations. Next came the suspensions. Finally came the ax, but only after Procter & Gamble, General Motors, American Express, GlaxoSmithKline and SprintNextel said they were leaving. Had the advertisers followed the example set by, say, Tom Oliphant, formerly of the *Boston Globe*, who appeared on the program and announced "Good morning, Mr. Imus, and solidarity forever, by the way"—then Imus would surely have been back in the black/gay/Jew/woman–bashing business faster than he could (again) say "nigger jokes."

The post-Imus landscape, what's more, is hardly one dominated by Bill Moyers or even Brian Williams. Most right-wing radio and much of cable resembles a sonic cesspool of anti-black, anti-gay and anti–almost anything but white Christian male rhetoric. ABC and CNN are both so enamored of the opinions of that right-wing ranter Glenn Beck, they are willing to share him. Beck returns the favor by employing the public airwaves and fiber-optic cables to warn that if "Muslims and Arabs" don't "act now" and "step to the plate" to condemn terrorism, they "will be looking through a razor-wire fence at the West." He also announces, "We need to be the first ones in the recruitment office lining up to shoot the bad Muslims in the head." It's not merely Muslims at whom Beck directs his hate speech. He termed Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a fallen soldier, "a pretty big prostitute" before changing his mind and offering up "tragedy pimp" as somehow more accurate.

His colleague Neil Boortz, a radio host, explains to listeners that Islam is "a religion of vicious, violent, bloodthirsty cretins" and that former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney is a "ghetto slut." Michael Savage—fired by MSNBC for, predictably, telling a gay caller he was a "sodomite" who should "get AIDS and die" but is still in good standing on talk-radio—terms Barbara Walters "a double-talking slut" and a "mental prostitute." Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly, while marginally more civilized in most instances, nevertheless regularly traffic in anti-black, anti-Arab, anti-gay, anti-female—and in O'Reilly's case, anti-Semitic—stereotypes with equivalent consistency. Fox's John Gibson calls Iraqis "knuckle-dragging savages."

Imus possessed a supernatural power to make the highest-minded of character cops turn a blind eye to his crimes against civil behavior. Sometimes he received a Good Housekeeping Seal directly from his victims, Stockholm Syndrome–style. For instance, according to Imus, Howard Kurtz, CNN and the *Washington Post*'s deeply conflicted media cop, is "a boner-nosed…beanie-wearing Jew boy." But Kurtz, who enjoyed Imus's promotion of his books on the air, says he "just shrugged it off" as "Imus made fun of blacks, Jews, gays, politicians. He called them lying weasels. This was part of his charm."

While almost everyone involved with the man was guilty of some level of hypocrisy, perhaps the most delicious was that of the self-appointed Moralizer in Chief, Joe Lieberman, whose appearances were an Imus staple. As the late and much-missed Lars-Erik Nelson once noted, Lieberman could complain from one side of his mouth that "we are lowering the standards of what is acceptable in our society, and we are sending a message to our children," and denounce an "acceptance of rude language, foul imagery and gross behavior in the entertainment mainstream." But that very week, Lieberman's buddy Imus contributed to the public discourse references to then–Attorney General Janet Reno in crotchless pantyhose and as a drunk repeatedly saying "shit."

Because of Imus's unique status both within the elite and as the opening act on MSNBC's daily lineup, he was also uniquely vulnerable to the kind of frenzy that demanded a dramatic ending. Savage, of course, lost his brief MSNBC gig, and Beck might be vulnerable to a similar campaign someday, should Media Matters catch him in the act. But generally, white radio shock jocks are granted the same pass, when it comes to transgressing the boundaries of good taste and verbal violence, that has been accorded to gangsta rappers.

Liberals prefer to ignore this comparison, insisting that there is something authentic and artistic about hate speech coming out of the mouths of millionaire black men as compared with millionaire white men. I disagree. While the social contexts that produce such speech are obviously quite different, the desensitizing effect it has on cultural communication is the same. Both talk-radio and gangsta rap represent women as legitimate objects of sexual violence. Both teach white men to regard nonwhites as subhuman. Both invite verbal and sometimes actual violence against gays and Arabs. If we seek to eliminate one, we can hardly excuse the other. If, instead, we take a position on behalf of free speech and against censoriousness and political correctness, that has to be consistent as well. Leftists have paid a significant price in the marketplace of debate in recent decades for their failed efforts to try to control the speech of those with whom they disagree. Speaking purely politically, the "political correctness" campaign has proven a kind of boomerang, undermining the credibility of those who demand it.

Honestly, figuring all this out is a lot harder than it looks. ■

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ARTICLES

As Congress begins to consider reauthorization of the Bush Administration's 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, The Nation *asked Linda Darling-Hammond, a leading education expert, to examine the law, its consequences and prospects for improving the legislation. Those responding in this forum include sociologist and author Pedro Noguera, longtime educator and National Urban League vice president Velma L. Cobb and senior NYU scholar and veteran school principal Deborah Meier.* —*The Editors*

LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

When Congress passed George W. Bush's signature education initiative, No Child Left Behind, it was widely hailed as a bipartisan breakthrough—a victory for American children, particularly those traditionally underserved by public schools. Now, five years later, the debate over the law's reauthorization has a decidedly different tone. As the House and Senate consider whether the law should be preserved—and if so, how it should be changed—high-profile Republicans are expressing their disenchantment with NCLB, while many newly elected Democrats are seeking a major overhaul as well.

What happened? Most discussions focus on the details of the more than 1,000-page law, which has provoked widespread criticism for the myriad issues it has raised. All of its flaws deserve scrutiny in the reauthorization debate, but it's also worth taking a step back to ask what the nation actually needs educationally. Lagging far behind our international peers in educational outcomes—and with one of the most unequal educational systems in the industrialized world—we need, I believe, something much more than and much different from what NCLB offers. We badly need a national policy that enables schools to meet the intellectual demands of the twenty-first century. More fundamentally, we need to pay off the educational debt to disadvantaged students that has accrued over centuries of unequal access to quality education.

NCLB's Promise—and Problems

In 2002 civil rights advocates praised NCLB for its emphasis on improving education for students of color, those living in poverty, new English learners and students with disabilities. NCLB aims to raise achievement and close the achievement gap by setting annual test-score targets for subgroups of students, based on a goal of "100 percent proficiency" by 2014. These targets are tied to school sanctions that can lead to school reconstitutions or closures, as well as requirements for student transfers. In addition, NCLB requires schools to hire "highly qualified teachers" and states to develop plans to provide such teachers.

NCLB contains some major breakthroughs. First, by flagging differences in student performance by race and class, it shines a spotlight on longstanding inequalities and could trigger attention

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to the needs of students neglected in many schools. Second, by insisting that all students are entitled to qualified teachers, the law has stimulated recruitment efforts in states where low-income and "minority" students have experienced a revolving door of inexperienced, untrained teachers. While recent studies have found that teacher quality is a critical influence on student achievement, teachers are the most inequitably distributed school resource. This first-time-ever recognition of students' right to qualified teachers is historically significant.

This noble agenda, however, has been nearly lost in the law's problematic details. Dubbed No Child Left Untested, No School Board Left Standing and No Child's Behind Left, among other nicknames, the law has been protested by more than twenty states and dozens of school districts that have voted to resist specific provisions. One state and a national teachers association have brought lawsuits against the federal government based on the unfunded costs and dysfunctional side effects of the law. Critics claim that the law's focus on complicated tallies of multiple-choice-test scores has dumbed down the curriculum, fostered a "drill and kill" approach to teaching, mistakenly labeled successful schools as failing, driven teachers and middle-class students out of public schools and harmed special education students and English-language learners through inappropriate assessments and efforts to push out low-scoring students in order to boost scores. Indeed, recent analyses have found that rapid gains in education outcomes stimulated by reforms in the 1990s have stalled under NCLB, with math increases slowing and reading on the decline.

The noble agenda of NCLB—focusing attention on race and class inequality—has been nearly lost in the law's problematic details.

At base, the law has misdefined the problem. It assumes that what schools need is more carrots and sticks rather than fundamental changes.

A Focus on Testing Rather Than Investing. Most centrally, the law does not address the profound educational inequalities that plague our nation. With high-spending schools outspending low-spending schools at least three to one in most states, multiplied further by inequalities across states, the United States has the most inequitable education system in the industrialized world. School funding lawsuits brought in more than twenty-five states describe apartheid schools serving low-income students of color with crumbling facilities, overcrowded classrooms, out-of-date textbooks, no science labs, no art or music courses and a revolving door of untrained teachers, while their suburban counterparts, spending twice as much for students with fewer needs, offer expansive libraries, up-to-date labs and technology, small classes, well-qualified teachers and expert specialists, in luxurious facilities.

The funding allocated by NCLB—less than 10 percent of most schools' budgets—does not meet the needs of the under-resourced schools, where many students currently struggle to learn. Nor does the law require that states demonstrate progress toward equitable and adequate funding or greater opportunities to learn. Although NCLB requires "highly qualified teachers," the lack of a federal teacher supply policy makes this a hollow promise in many communities.

At a time when the percentage of Americans living in severe poverty has reached a thirty-two-year high, NCLB seeks to improve the schools poor students attend through threats and sanctions rather than the serious investments in education and welfare such an effort truly requires. As Gloria Ladson-Billings, former president of the American Educational Research Association, has noted, the problem we face is less an "achievement gap" than an educational debt that has accumulated over centuries of denied access to education and employment, reinforced by deepening poverty and resource inequalities in schools. Until American society confronts the accumulated educational debt owed to these students and takes responsibility for the inferior resources they receive, Ladson-Billings argues, children of color and of poverty will continue to be left behind.

Disincentives for Improving Learning. Even if NCLB funding were to increase, its framework does not allow for important structural changes—for example, a system of teacher preparation and professional development that would routinely produce high-quality teaching; curriculums and assessments that encourage critical thinking and performance skills; high-quality preschool education, libraries and learning materials; and healthcare for poor children. Instead, the law wastes scarce resources on a complicated test score game that appears to be narrowing the curriculum, uprooting successful programs and pushing low-achieving students out of many schools.

To go back to first principles, we must ask what US schools should be doing in a world where education is increasingly essential and the nature of knowledge is rapidly changing. What would we need to do to graduate all of our students with the ability to apply knowledge to complex problems, communicate and collaborate effectively and find and manage information?

We might want to be doing some of the things that higher-achieving countries have been doing over the past twenty years as they have left us further and further behind educationally. As an indicator of the growing distance, the United States ranks twenty-eighth of forty countries in mathematics, right above Latvia, and graduates only about 75 percent of students, instead of the more than 95 percent now common elsewhere. Most high-achieving countries not only provide high-quality universal preschool and healthcare for children; they also fund their schools centrally and equally, with additional funds going to the neediest schools. Furthermore, they support a better-prepared teaching force—funding competitive salaries and high-quality teacher education, mentoring and ongoing professional development for all teachers. NCLB's answer to the problem of preparing teachers for the increasingly challenging job they face has been to call for alternative routes that often reduce training for the teachers of the poor.

Finally, high-achieving nations focus their curriculums on critical thinking and problem solving, using exams that require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve

Linda Darling-Hammond, the Charles E. Ducommon Professor of Education at Stanford University, is the author of The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work *(Jossey-Bass).*

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complex real-world problems and defend their ideas orally and in writing. These assessments are not used to rank or punish schools, or to deny promotion or diplomas to students. (In fact, several countries have explicit proscriptions against such practices.) They are used to evaluate curriculum and guide investments in learning—in short, to help schools improve. Finally, by asking students to show what they know through real-world applications of knowledge, these other nations' assessment systems encourage serious intellectual activities that are being driven out of many US schools by the tests promoted by NCLB.

Narrowing the Curriculum. No Child Left Behind has actually made it harder for states to improve the quality of teaching. At the core of these problems is an accountability system borrowed from Texas and administered by an Education Department with a narrow view of what constitutes learning. This system requires testing every student in math, reading and, soon, science and issuing sanctions to schools that do not show sufficient progress for each subpopulation of students toward an abstract goal of "100 percent proficiency" on state tests—with benchmarks that vary from state to state.

Ironically, states that set high standards risk having the most schools labeled 'failing' under No Child Left Behind.

Ironically, states that set high standards risk having the most schools labeled "failing" under NCLB. Thus Minnesota, where eighth graders are first in the nation in mathematics and on a par with the top countries in the world, had 80 percent of schools on track to be labeled failing according to the federal rules. In addition, states that earlier created forward-looking performance assessment systems like those used abroad have begun to abandon them for antiquated, machine-scored tests that more easily satisfy the law. As emphasis on drilling for multiple-choice tests has increased, the amount of research, project work and scientific inquiry has declined, and twelfth grade reading scores have dropped nationwide.

The Education Department has discouraged states from using more instructionally useful forms of assessment that involve teachers in scoring tasks requiring extensive writing and analysis. Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Nebraska and Vermont, among others, had to wrestle with the department to maintain their sophisticated performance-based assessment systems, which resemble those used in high-scoring nations around the world. Connecticut, which assesses students with open-ended tasks like designing, conducting and analyzing a science experiment (and not coincidentally ranks first in the nation in academic performance), sued the federal government for the funds needed to maintain its assessments on an "every child, every year" basis. The Education Secretary suggested the state drop these tasks for multiple-choice tests. Thus the administration of the law is driving the US curriculum in the opposite direction from what a twenty-first-century economy requires.

Distracting Schools From Productive Reforms. Other dysfunctional consequences derive from the law's complicated accountability scheme, which analysts project will label between 85 and 99 percent of the nation's public schools "failing" within the next few years, even when they are high-performing, improving in achievement and closing the gap. This will happen as states raise their proficiency levels to a national benchmark set far above grade level, and as schools must hit targets for test scores and participation rates for each racial/ethnic, language, income and disability group on several tests—often more than thirty in all. Missing any one of these—for example, having 94 percent of low-income students take the test instead of 95 percent—causes the school to fail to "make AYP" (adequate yearly progress).

Worse still, there is a Catch-22 for those serving English-language learners and special-needs students. In *Alice in Wonderland* fashion, the law assigns these students to special subgroups because they do not meet the proficiency standard, and they are removed from the subgroup as they catch up, so it is impossible for the subgroups ever to be 100 percent proficient. Schools serving a significant share of these learners will inevitably be labeled failing, even if all their students consistently make strong learning gains. Those who warned that the law was a conservative scheme to undermine public schools and establish vouchers were reinforced in their view when the Bush Administration's recent reauthorization plan recommended that students in schools that do not achieve their annual test benchmarks be offered vouchers at public expense.

As a result of these tortuous rules, more than 40 percent of the nation's public schools have been placed on intervention status at some point in the past four years, including some of the highest-achieving schools in the nation and many that are narrowing the achievement gap. These schools have sometimes been forced to dismantle successful programs in favor of dubious interventions pushed by the Education Department—including specific reading programs under the Reading First plan, which, the inspector general found, was managed in such a way as to line the pockets of favored publishers while forcing districts to abandon other, more successful reading programs. Although some of these schools are truly failing and require major help to improve, it is impossible to separate them from schools caught in the statistical mousetrap.

Punishing the Neediest Schools and Students. At least some of the schools identified as "needing improvement" are surely dismal places where little learning occurs, or are complacent schools that have not attended to the needs of their less advantaged students. It is fair to suggest that students in such schools deserve other choices if the schools cannot change. However, there is growing evidence that the law's strategy for improving schools may, paradoxically, reduce access to education for the most vulnerable students.

NCLB's practice of labeling schools as failures makes it even harder for them to attract and keep qualified teachers. As one Florida principal asked, "Is anybody going to want to dedicate their life to a school that has already been labeled a failure?" What's more, schools that have been identified as not meeting AYP standards must use their federal funds to support choice and "supplemental services," such as privately provided after-school tutoring, leaving them with even fewer resources for their core educational programs. Unfortunately, many of the private supplemental service providers have proved ineffective and unaccountable, and transfers to better schools have been impossible in communities where such schools are unavailable or

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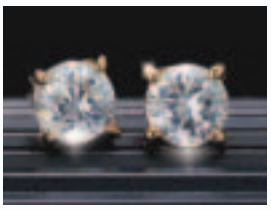

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uninterested in serving students with low achievement, poor attendance and other problems that might bring their own average test scores down. Thus, rather than expanding educational opportunities for low-income students and students of color, the law in many communities further reduces the quality of education available in the schools they must attend.

Perhaps the most adverse unintended consequence of NCLB is that it creates incentives for schools to rid themselves of students who are not doing well, producing higher scores at the expense of vulnerable students' education. Studies have found that sanctioning schools based on average student scores leads schools to retain students in grade so that grade-level scores will look better (although these students ultimately do less well and drop out at higher rates), exclude low-scoring students from admissions and encourage such students to transfer or drop out.

Recent studies in Massachusetts, New York and Texas show how schools have raised test scores while "losing" large numbers of low-scoring students. In a large Texas city, for example, scores soared while tens of thousands of students—mostly African-American and Latino—disappeared from school. Educators reported that exclusionary policies were used to hold back, suspend, expel or counsel out students in order to boost test scores. Overall, fewer than 40 percent of African-American and Latino students graduated. Paradoxically, NCLB's requirement for disaggregating data by race creates incentives for eliminating those at the bottom of each subgroup, especially where schools have little capacity to improve the quality of services such students receive. As a consequence of high-stakes testing, graduation rates for African-American and Latino students have declined in a number of states. In the NCLB paradigm, there is no solution to this problem, as two-way accountability does not exist: The child and the school are accountable to the state for test performance, but the state is not held accountable to the child or his school for providing adequate educational resources.

How to (Really) Leave No Child Behind

There are hundreds of proposals for tweaking NCLB, but a substantial paradigm shift is required if our education system is to support powerful learning for all students. The Forum on Educational Accountability, a group of more than 100 education and civil rights organizations—including the National Urban League, the NAACP and the League of United Latin American Citizens, as well as the associations representing teachers, administrators and school boards—has argued that "the law's emphasis needs to shift from applying sanctions for failing to raise test scores to holding states and localities accountable for making the systemic changes that improve student achievement."

How might this be done? A new paradigm for national education policy should be guided by dual commitments to support meaningful learning on the part of students, teachers and schools; and to pay off the educational debt, making it possible for all students to benefit from more productive schools.

A new Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) should start by helping states develop world-class standards, curriculums and assessments and to use them for improving teaching. Returning to the more productive approach of President Clinton's Goals 2000 initiative, the federal government should assist states in developing systems for evaluating student progress that are performance based—including assessments like essays, research papers and science experiments that are embedded in the curriculum and scored by teachers using common criteria—leveraging intellectually ambitious learning and providing information that continuously improves teaching.

School progress should also be measured in a more comprehensive manner—including such factors as student progress and continuation, graduation and classroom performance on tasks beyond multiple-choice tests—and gains should be assessed by how individual students improve over time. To eliminate the statistical gantlet that penalizes schools serving the most diverse populations, the AYP system should be replaced with a continuous improvement model. While continuing to report test scores by race and class, schools should be judged on whether students make progress on multiple measures of achievement, including those that assess higher-order thinking and understanding, and insure appropriate assessment for special-education students and English-language learners. And "opportunity to learn" standards specifying the provision of adequate materials, facilities and teachers should accompany assessments of student learning, creating benchmarks for the pursuit of equity.

The new ESEA must finally address the deep and tenacious educational debt that holds our nation's future in hock and insure that every child has access to adequate school resources, facilities and quality teachers. Federal education funding to states should be tied to each state's movement toward equitable access to education resources. Furthermore, the obvious truth—that schools alone are not responsible for student achievement—should propel attention to programs that will provide adequate healthcare and nutrition, safe and secure housing, and healthy communities for children.

Major investments must be made in the ability of schools to hire and support well-prepared teachers and leaders. While NCLB sets an expectation for hiring qualified teachers, it does not include supports to make this possible. Federal leadership in developing an adequate supply of well-qualified teachers is needed. Just as it has helped provide an adequate supply of physicians for more than forty years, it can provide training for those who prepare in specialties for which there is a shortage and agree to locate in underserved areas.

A Marshall Plan for Teaching could insure that all students are taught by well-qualified teachers within the next five years through a federal policy that (1) recruits new teachers using service scholarships that underwrite their preparation for high-need fields and locations and adds incentives for expert veteran teachers to teach in high-need schools; (2) strengthens teachers' preparation through support for professional development schools, like teaching hospitals, which offer top-quality urban teacher residencies to candidates who will stay in high-need districts; and (3) improves teacher retention and effectiveness by insuring that novices have mentoring support during their early years, when 30 percent of them drop out.

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Dr. Thomas F. X. Noble (Ph.D., Michigan State University) is a noted history teacher at the University of Notre Dame. While teaching at the University of Virginia, he won the Alumni Distinguished Professor award. He holds three fellowships and is the author of numerous articles and books.

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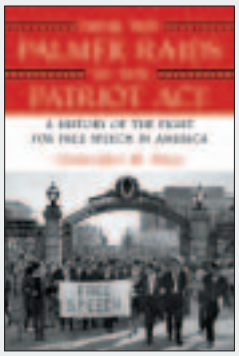

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Students will not learn at higher levels without the benefit of good teaching, a strong curriculum and adequate resources. Merely adopting tests and punishments will not create genuine accountability. In fact, adopting punitive sanctions without investments increases the likelihood that the most vulnerable students will be more severely victimized by a system not organized to support their learning. A policy agenda that leverages equitable resources and invests strategically in high-quality teaching would support real accountability—that is, accountability to children and parents for providing the conditions under which students can be expected to acquire the skills they need to succeed. ■

PEDRO NOGUERA

Linda Darling-Hammond makes it clear that there are many problems associated with NCLB that have undermined the benefits it was intended to deliver. That is certainly true, but it's also important to emphasize that opposition to NCLB is not based on a desire to return to the past—to the time when it was possible for poorly educated students to graduate with meaningless diplomas or when many schools showed little interest or ability in promoting higher levels of learning and achievement for all students without regard to race, disability, language or background.

Despite its failings, two basic goals of NCLB remain important: Students should be educated under higher academic standards, and those responsible for educating them should be held accountable.

Few NCLB critics argue against higher academic standards. However, while it is easy to set the standards (actually, it has not been that easy in several states), it is far more important to insure that the standards and conditions under which students are educated are also raised. In pursuit of higher test scores, "failing" schools have enacted measures that have actually undermined the quality of education and social well-being of students. Schools and districts striving to "teach to the test" have eliminated or reduced access to art, music and even science if they are not covered on standardized tests. Some have eliminated field trips, recess and physical education. In many secondary schools, students have been required to enroll in test prep courses, some of which meet for nearly two hours a day. NCLB has done nothing to insure that students are taught in enriched learning environments, exposed to creative and effective teachers and given access to stimulating and rigorous curriculums.

In the area of accountability, NCLB has opted for the path of least resistance, holding accountable the most vulnerable (students) and the least protected (principals), but not other parties—elected officials, senior school administrators, teachers and parents. In cities such as Chicago, New York, Boston and now Los Angeles, mayors have demanded control over the public schools but mayoral control does not include specific account-

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ability standards. What happens if schools don't improve under their leadership? In a public debate, I asked the superintendent of a large urban district who was an advocate for high-stakes exams how many administrators would be fired if as many as 50 percent of his seniors were denied diplomas, as was expected the first year the exams were implemented. Puzzled, he responded, "Maybe a principal or two will have to go." That June 6,000 students who would have graduated under previous standards were denied diplomas, and the same superintendent, the governor and the leading newspapers declared the results a victory for high standards. The fact that a third of those students were recent immigrants who were illiterate in English, another third were identified as learning disabled and the final third were students who came from high poverty districts long known for their failing schools didn't seem to trouble any of the "standards" advocates.

Some of the leading advocates of NCLB have been liberal legislators (Ted Kennedy and George Miller were two of the leading sponsors of NCLB in the Senate and House) and civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and MALDEF. These NCLB advocates have viewed the law as a tool to advance the interests of the underserved by insuring that educational standards are raised. But what they've generally failed to see is that the scope and purpose of NCLB would have to be broadened considerably to address the real needs of poor children and struggling schools. This would mean:

§ *Responding to the nonacademic needs of poor children.* If we want to insure that all students have the opportunity to learn, we must insure that their basic needs are met. Students who are hungry should be fed, children who need coats in the winter should receive them and those who have been abused or neglected should have counseling and care. Expanding access to healthcare, preschool and affordable housing, and providing more generous parental leave policies should be included on the education reform agenda.

§ *Holding state governments accountable for high standards in schools.* Just as we do for the maintenance of highways, airports and the public water supply, we should insure that common standards are upheld at all public schools. Instead of labeling schools with letter grades, as Florida does, state governments should adopt standards to insure that all students attend schools staffed by qualified teachers and learn in safe, clean, well-maintained facilities.

§ *Making schools more responsive to the parents and families they serve through systems of mutual accountability.* To a large degree, schools in middle-class communities operate with a sense of accountability to the parents they serve. Affluent educated parents often have the ability to insist upon high-quality education for their children, while schools in poor communities rarely feel accountable to parents. One way to address this is to include parents on site councils and give them a say in decisions that affect the governance of the schools their children attend. Schools must also make the rights and responsibilities of parents clear and the expectations of all key parties—parents, teachers, students and administrators—explicit.

§ *Involving teachers in mentoring and evaluating their peers.* In too many school districts, teachers unions see their role largely as one of defending the rights only of teachers, even when they are incompetent and unfit for teaching. Rarely are teachers unions

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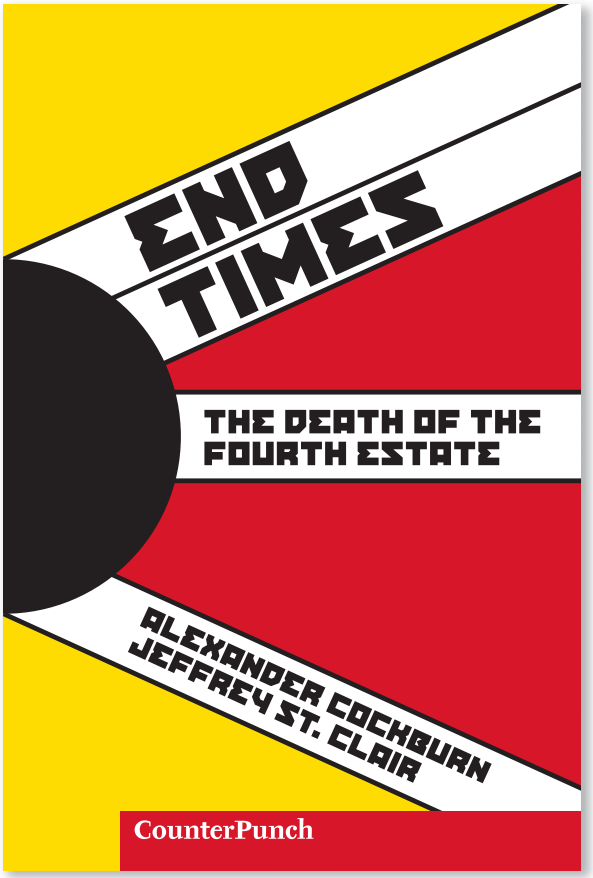

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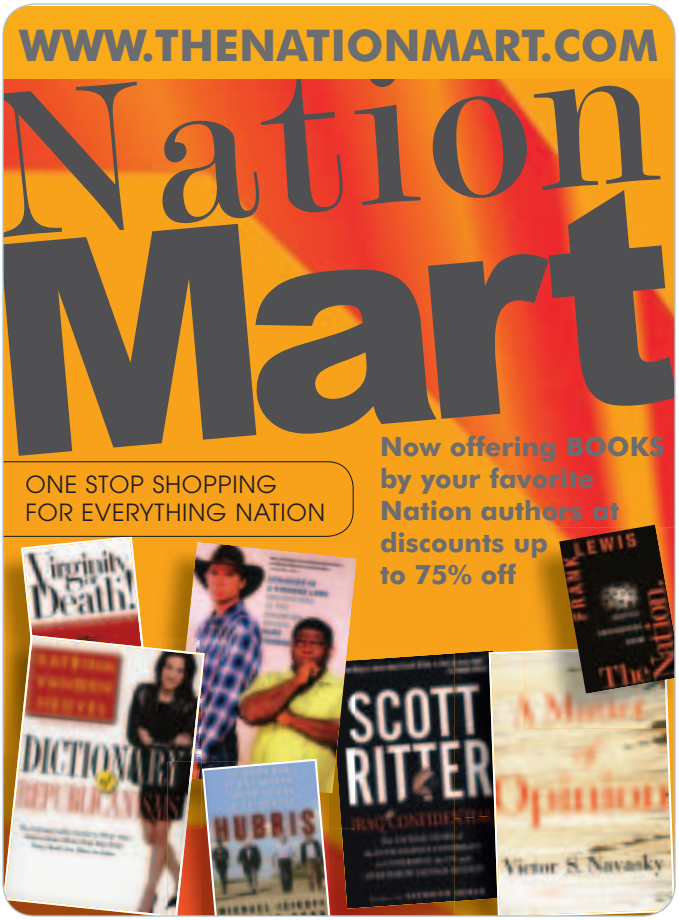
seen as advocates for improving conditions within schools (for students or teachers) or for upholding professional standards. In the small number of districts where teachers are included in the process of evaluating their peers, teaching standards have been raised and the number of teachers evaluated out of the profession has increased. Peer evaluation has also resulted in greater support for teachers in need. Unions must take the lead in removing incompetent teachers from classrooms as well as advocating for the rights of children and public education generally.

Pedro Noguera, a professor of sociology at New York University, is the author of City Schools and the American Dream *and co-editor of* Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools.

VELMA L. COBB

NCLB was unprecedented in its goal to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education." It won bipartisan support and had the backing of many civil rights organizations because it brought to the forefront issues not previously acknowledged, much less addressed. Under NCLB, data about students' performance is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, language and class, exposing what many of us long knew: Poor children and children of color are not receiving the kind of education that will lead them to high academic performance. The law also requires that all children have access to a highly qualified teacher,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the greatest in-school factor affecting student performance, according to research by Ron Ferguson at Harvard. Yes, NCLB has fallen short on its promise and potential, but recognizing its problems does not mean its goals are not worthy.

Still, those of us who were supportive of NCLB's goals always knew there needed to be a larger conversation—a conversation on the opportunity to learn. Even in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, are we ready to talk about poverty? Are we ready to talk about race?

It is no small coincidence that poor schools are in poor neighborhoods. If we are to get serious about education reform for the twenty-first century, we must talk about community development. Only a full-empowerment agenda will address the unequal access to quality education. The National Urban League has identified workforce development, housing, prison reform, health and wellness, as well as education, as core areas to "empower communities and change lives."

Darling-Hammond is correct that we must "invest." We must invest in high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Children must enter school ready to take advantage of teaching and learning. We must address the growth and development of adolescents as well. NCLB did not deal with high schools, for the most part, but this nation's high schools are in tremendous need of an overhaul. All young people need access to the structures, supports and opportunities that yield positive youth outcomes. The reauthorization of NCLB should provide for these needed changes, raising standards for teaching while also expanding learning in nonschool hours and engaging parents and guardians. More money will be needed to assist states and districts to achieve better outcomes. States and districts also need to take responsibility for redirecting existing resources to areas showing the greatest results. I agree with Darling-Hammond that a "continuous improvement model" is needed rather than the current system of using AYP (adequate yearly progress) statistics.

"It takes an extraordinary and unrealistic optimism to look at the internal problems our country faces and avoid the conclusion that it is in danger of coming apart at the seams." Whitney Young Jr. said these words in 1970, and they ring true today, especially in education. Whether we make strategic changes to NCLB or abolish it completely, we are in danger of coming apart at the seams if we do not address the larger issues of poverty and race in which access to quality education is embedded.

Velma L. Cobb, a longtime educator, is vice president of education and youth at the National Urban League. She is currently an adjunct at Bank Street College Graduate School of Education.

DEBORAH MEIER

Linda Darling-Hammond has laid out how misguided, if well intentioned, the current version of Title I/ESEA is (the means, since 1965, by which we have tried to balance the fiscal inequities facing low-income kids) and how we can change direction. I'd add just a few points.

There are two important areas in which we could work toward narrowing the achievement test gap aside from directly

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through schooling: narrow the health gap (as Richard Rothstein argues) and narrow the income gap. Both paths would positively affect test scores as well as real learning. Since NCLB has been in effect, we have instead widened such gaps. Although we claim to be worried about our poor international standing on tests, we might better worry about the fact that we rank nearly last in measures of childcare. These data lead me to be somewhat suspicious about our will to upgrade educational outcomes.

The continuous focus on which kids fail to live up to our ideals—higher test scores—reinforces an ugly aspect of our ever fiercer competitive culture. The idea that the poor, especially the poor of color, are pulling down our system is repeated over and over. The idea of equal human potential is a new and fragile idea; I wonder what all of this pounding away at the so-called deficiencies of "those kids" is doing to this late-twentieth-century concept. Until we pay off "the educational debt" Darling-Hammond describes, we will be forced to keep living with it and with the assumptions that spawned it: our underlying race- and class-biased interpretation of "intelligence."

Finally, a reminder: Democracy was invented as a system of accountability. Our form of democracy rests on a balance of power among different judging bodies. Our schools, in contrast, now rely on only a few bare tools of measurement—mainly those based on fill-in-the-bubble answers to test questions. We wouldn't give out driver's licenses based on such a flimsy criterion as a paper-and-pencil test. We require a road test. But we have settled for far less when it comes to educating all our children well. (And in "we" I include some of my political friends, who are often worse than my usual foes in their admiration for test scores.) Schools are, first and foremost, where we turn to reinforce the intellectual and moral rationale for democracy. If the people are unwise, as Jefferson noted, we must better educate their discretion, not disarm our democracy. Yet, of late, when it comes to schooling—a process designed specifically to educate on behalf of democracy—we seem to have turned our backs on the power of human judgment.

Deborah Meier is a senior scholar at New York University, formerly the principal of K-8 public schools in New York and Boston, and the author of many books about her experiences.

PLACING BUDGET DEFICITS AT THE CENTER SETS GOVERNMENT UP AS THE PROBLEM.

The Flaws in Rubinomics

THOMAS PALLEY

This is the second in a series of essays outlining a progressive alternative to the neoliberal thinking that has been dominant within the Democratic Party leadership in recent years. —The Editors

CAROLINA ARENTSEN

Before Democrats can begin to reverse a generation of laissez-faire policy dominance that has put corporations and CEOs ahead of working families, they must debunk Rubinomics, which makes the budget deficit the central focus of economic policy. This focus rests on faulty economics and stands to lock Democrats into confused policy messaging and a path of fiscal austerity that leaves no room for spending on infrastructure, alternative energy or education, among other needs.

The central proposition of Rubinomics—named after former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, who shaped economic policy under President Clinton—is that budget deficits reduce saving and increase interest rates, thereby reducing investment and lowering future living standards. However, the record shows that interest rates have fallen to historic lows over the past several years, a time of large deficits, which fits the common-sense observation that the Federal Reserve largely determines interest rates contingent on economic conditions. Meanwhile, a flood of savings has poured into financial markets from wealthy individuals and pension funds.

Nor does the "twin deficit" argument—that budget deficits cause trade deficits—make sense, as evidenced by the fact that in the late 1990s the United States ran record trade deficits as the budget moved into record surplus. Rather, the trade deficit is due to undervalued foreign currencies and export-led growth strategies by many countries that look to grow by selling to the United States while restricting purchases of American-made goods.

Despite these logical failings, Rubinomics still has great appeal because Rubin's tenure as Treasury Secretary coincided with the 1990s boom. That appeal is misplaced. The rooster crows at dawn but does not cause the sunrise. Rubin was Treasury Secretary during the boom, but budget surpluses did not cause it.

The political origins of Rubinomics can be traced back to the 1970s, when conservative charges about big government and "tax and spend" liberals took deep hold on America's political consciousness. Throughout the 1980s Democrats struggled to respond, eventually settling in the 1990s on a strategy of "fiscal responsibility." That strategy was always transitional and defensive, aimed at blunting Republicans' relentless attack on government and plutocratic tax cuts. The long-term goal was always an alternative narrative to free-market mythology.

Thomas Palley is the author of Plenty of Nothing: The Downsizing of the American Dream and the Case for Structural Keynesianism. *He blogs weekly on economic policy at www.thomaspalley.com.*

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The tragedy is that once a myth takes hold, it must be lived out to be disproved. That is the price paid for losing the war of ideas. This process has now worked itself out, and America is finally grasping the fallacies of market fundamentalism. That creates a historic opportunity, but Rubinomics risks a tragic second act. Rubinomics worked brilliantly as a political strategy in the 1990s. But its success was political, not economic. However, its supporters have lost sight of this and now credit it with causing the late-'90s boom. Consequently, they argue for sticking with Rubinomics, thereby missing the opportunity created by the dismal failure of Bush's presidency.

Instead of continuing down a mistaken path that focuses on the budget deficit, proponents of a progressive economic policy should focus on increasing investment, which is key to productivity growth and full employment. Rising wages and full employment, in combination with a fairly valued dollar, create a favorable investment climate. That sets the stage for a virtuous circle of shared prosperity. Investment raises productivity, which raises wages and profits, thereby increasing demand and drawing more investment. This is the real basis of a rising tide that lifts all boats. With regard to the trade deficit, the solution is to revalue exchange rates, raise wages abroad so that foreign workers can consume more of what they produce and have countries adopt coordinated policies that stimulate the global economy. That would benefit all, and it is why labor standards must be foremost in trade agreements.

Rubinomics is not only bad economics but also bad politics. First, by arguing that the problem is a shortage of savings, Rubinomics promotes a conservative tax agenda privileging saving and profits, which primarily benefits the rich. Second, by placing budget deficits at the center of the saving problem, it sets government up as a problem and makes a case for shrinking it. Furthermore, by promising to lock Democrats into a path of fiscal austerity, it exposes future Democratic Administrations to the charge of "flip-flopping." This is because fiscal stimulus will inevitably be needed when the current unbalanced boom ends.

The greatest tragedy of all concerns the potentially disastrous consequences for Social Security and Medicare. These programs are more vital than ever, given America's aging population and retirement wealth inequality. Yet Rubinomics establishes the premise for dismantling them. By claiming the budget must be balanced to increase saving, it sets up a political deal whereby Republicans suspend their unjustifiable tax cuts in return for Democrats putting Social Security and Medicare on the table. This would be the ultimate conservative triumph, the evisceration of the crown jewels of FDR's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society.

The cruel irony is that Democrats would be the agent of this destruction at the very moment when history is proffering the opportunity for a great reversal of market fundamentalism. At a time of extraordinary productivity growth, due to the maturation of the Internet and other technologies, Rubinomics establishes the premise that America cannot afford these great programs. Most bitter of all, once institutions like Social Security are dismantled, they are hard to resurrect, whereas tax cuts can easily be restored. This means that dealing Social Security benefit cuts in return for a repeal of the Bush tax cuts is both unjustified and a political trap—and Hank Paulson knows it. ■

STATE POLITICIANS OF ALL STRIPES ARE RETHINKING THEIR AVERSION TO RAISING TAXES.

Look Who's Taxing

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Texas State Senator John Carona is the very image of a Republican lawmaker, right down to the salt-and-pepper hair, the monogrammed tie and the day job in real estate. He represents north Dallas and the adjacent suburbs, a bastion of country club Republicanism, whose residents are not typically enthusiastic about either taxing or spending. So it was more than a little surprising to hear him say that it was high time the State of Texas raised taxes. "No one likes to pay higher taxes," he told me when I interviewed him in Austin earlier this spring. "But the people who elect us send us to the capital to do what is best for the state. The vast majority didn't send us so that we would never raise new revenue. Somehow along the way, the conservative movement—and I am a political conservative—has taken the definition of conservatism to mean the unwillingness to ever raise taxes for any purpose no matter what the need. And that is just foolish and wrongheaded."

CAROLINA ARENTSEN

Carona's not alone. Over the past few years, momentum has begun to build, bit by bit, against the antitax movement, and it has largely flown under the radar of the national media. A number of governors, from Democrats Jon Corzine of New Jersey and Mark Warner of Virginia to Republicans like Mitch Daniels of Indiana, have pushed through significant tax increases and been rewarded with high approval ratings. Daniels's apostasy was particularly meaningful, since he was once Bush's budget director and had been a lifelong fellow traveler of antitax warrior Grover Norquist. This year, other states are emulating Indiana. A recent article in the online publication *Stateline* noted that many states facing budgetary shortfalls are proposing significant tax hikes,

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in stark contrast to just a few years ago, when "legislatures… bent over backwards to avoid major tax hikes, instead raiding rainy day funds, borrowing money or expanding gambling to raise more revenue."

This is big news, because for much of the past two decades states have been the sites of Norquist's greatest victories. Conservative activists pushed through the disastrous Taxpayer Bill of Rights in Colorado, which made raising taxes nearly impossible, and have cowed thousands of state legislators and governors into signing a pledge to "oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes." The antitax fever spread to Democrats as well. Even Rod Blagojevich, running for governor in the friendly blue confines of Illinois in 2002, pledged to somehow address the state's fiscal woes and expand state services without raising sales or income taxes.

Unlike the federal government, which has the luxury of cutting taxes, increasing spending and selling its debt to finance the gap, many states are legally required to balance their budgets, so they've resorted to a grab bag of tricks and gimmicks to keep the government funded. Gambling has exploded, pension funds have been raided and many states are now reduced to selling off public assets. But eventually the bill comes due. Having spent the past four years running through every conceivable gimmick and trick, Blagojevich is now proposing $7 billion in new taxes, the largest increase in the state's history. What's more, the lion's share of the money would go not to closing a budget shortfall but to greatly expanding the state's medical coverage of the uninsured. He seems to think the politics are on his side. "It will be Armageddon," he said at a recent rally. "But we are on the side of the Lord, and we will prevail."

Blagojevich has made something of a fetish of picking fights with lawmakers, so his enthusiasm should be taken with a grain of salt. That said, the ground is clearly shifting. In 1994, when the tax revolt was arguably at its zenith, 66 percent of Americans said that the amount of federal income taxes they paid was too high. By 2006 that figure had dropped to 48 percent. And in 1994, one poll showed that people trusted Republicans over Democrats to handle taxes by a margin of 38 percent to 23 percent. By 2007 it had almost flipped: Respondents trusted Democrats on taxes by a 38 percent to 30 percent margin.

As is often the case with political trends, Washington is the last place to notice. Even while antitax fundamentalism flared in the states, Presidents were at least partially insulated from its most extreme strains: Conservative hero Ronald Reagan raised some taxes, as did both George H.W. Bush (after famously promising not to) and Clinton. But Norquist managed to convince fellow Republicans that H.W.'s defeat was the result of his signing a tax increase, and the son, ever vigilant against repeating the sins of the father, has committed himself to the Norquist catechism with zealous devotion, holding to it even in the face of a massively expensive war.

In so doing he has run up deficits and baited a trap for Democrats, particularly presidential hopefuls, who might be toying with the possibility of raising taxes. Driven by a desire for the approval of the Beltway mandarins, Democratic candidates are going to be tempted to package potential tax increases (for instance, repeal of the Bush tax cuts) as a means of restoring fiscal discipline and reducing the deficit. But telling people you're going to raise taxes to reduce the deficit is like telling them you're going to garnish their wages to pay off the gambling debts of their crazy vagabond uncle. It's no fun.

People seem ready to accept higher taxes, but only if those taxes are sold to them as paying for services they want the government to provide. "The notion that [social programs] are what Democrats want and what Republicans abhor may have been true thirty years ago," Carona told me. "But I feel like there's been a shift. Now everybody wants the programs, but one group is unwilling to pay for them and the other group is unable to pay for them."

Over the past six years, Republicans have succeeded in delinking taxes from the public services and social programs they pay for. It is the job of Democrats, particularly the presidential candidates who will have the largest platform, to re-establish that connection in voters' minds. John Edwards has the right idea on this score. He has proposed a fairly ambitious universal healthcare plan and says he'll push to raise taxes in order to help pay for it. "We're asking everybody to share in the responsibility of making healthcare work in this country," he says.

There's a phrase to describe this approach, and it will likely strike terror in the hearts of those Democrats who still carry the battle scars from tax-revolt skirmishes: tax and spend. Yes, that's become a toxic phrase in American political life, but after six years of tax cuts for the wealthy and an extortionate war, we might just have arrived at a moment when good old-fashioned tax and spend doesn't seem like such a bad idea. ■

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

leader Steny Hoyer on down to local union leaders. "Let's go after weak Republicans, not weak Democrats," said one Democratic consultant, who requested anonymity to avoid antagonizing bloggers. Another common criticism is that the strategy will push the Democratic majority "too far left"—off that cliff Tauscher warned about. Channeling the conventional wisdom in Washington, *Time* columnist Joe Klein recently derided Working For Us as a "suicidal waste of time" for left-wing "extremist" bloggers.

Yet the group's populist primary challenges do not fit into the left-right paradigm. The current revival of economic populism encompasses old-school liberals like New York's Charlie Rangel and Southern conservatives like Virginia's Jim Webb. As Moulitsas argued in a phone interview, "Economic issues are the one thing that unites the Democratic Party, from its most liberal wing to its most conservative wing."

Most important, if Working For Us sticks to the preferences of local constituents, the program will advance the democratic process more than a single ideology. Nowadays competitive Congressional races are a rarity in most of the country because both parties squash primaries and gerrymander districts. Members of Congress are almost always re-elected—even with high voter turnout, the "closely contested" 2004 election still sent 98 percent of incumbents back to the House. By backing primary candidates who would not otherwise be viable, Working For Us promises a little more democracy in a few handpicked districts—not exactly an extremist proposition. Once those campaigns are off the ground, of course, unions and bloggers cannot control the results. In a rare twist for modern Congressional campaigns, the outcome will actually depend on voters. ARI MELBER

Ari Melber (amelber@hotmail.com) writes about politics, public policy and Internet activism for The Nation.

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

given to female rape victims so they will be discouraged from filing for VA benefits or pursuing their claims in civil court. KAREN T. METER

Dover, Dela.

■ This article is so incredibly upsetting, I fear I can't adequately express my anger and shame about it. My husband was in the Army for more than twenty-six years (and we loved Army life). But there's an old saying that is all too true, then and now: "Nothing is too good for our brave men and women in uniform, and that's exactly what we're going to give them. Nothing." Where's the outrage? Are the parents and spouses of these soldiers being scared into silence? Where's Congress in all this? Most important, where can I sign up to protest this disgraceful treatment? MARY EMANUELSON

Eugene, Ore.

■ So the screwing goes on. My father was an atomic veteran, sent in twenty-four hours after the bomb blast in Bikini. I had to help him fight to get information on atomic veterans' benefits. I was stationed in Thailand during Vietnam in the bomb dump. Picture this area with absolutely no vegetation in the middle of the jungle. When I got out I started hearing about Agent Orange and went to the VA to be put on the Agent Orange registry. They wanted to deny me, saying they had no records of herbicides used in Thailand. Well, I pitched a big fit and finally got on the registry. Just last year the Defense Department admitted to the use of herbicides, not only in Thailand but in the States also. So you see, the military just wants your body. The higher-ups continue to be bought off with overgenerous salaries and benefits. I am sorry for the Iraq veterans and what they are going through. One more reason to get rid of Bush and his band of thugs. DIRK BEAULIEU

Eden, Ga.

■ My father is 85 and a World War II veteran. He received the same treatment. His wounds were called "pre-existing conditions," and he was told he'd get only 10 percent disability, but he never received it, and he gave up trying. A few years ago he joined a veterans' group that showed him how to get his benefits from long ago. He eventually received 100 percent disability, was reimbursed what was due, paid off all his bills and continues to receive it. TERI LOWERY

Brunswick, Me.

■ As a 2nd Marine Division psychiatrist during the latter years of Vietnam, I facilitated "General Discharge Under Honorable Conditions" for a number of marines. I tried to do right by each one, but I later learned that accepting the General Discharge was not in the best interest of many. The role of the psychological professional in the General Discharge invites a benign collusion with the suffering soldier and his/her command. The moment the soldier enters the professional's office, the "facts" seem to organize themselves to encourage expedient discharge. Negative representation is always possible, because when we surface the murky details of our lives, none of us look very good on paper.

However, the behavior of the professionals involved with Specialist Town and others goes way beyond benign collusion into the realm of serious corruption. These professionals are violating their deepest ethical principles by overlooking psychiatric symptoms and thereby failing to treat in the military setting while simultaneously blocking access to treatment in civilian life. These professionals are doing incalculable damage to soldier/citizens who had hoped to serve their country honorably. Full investigation is imperative. WALTER R. CHRISTIE, MD

KORS REPLIES

New York City

■ My inbox was flooded after *The Nation* ran my article on Spc. Jon Town, wounded by a rocket in Ramadi, Iraq, then diagnosed and discharged with "personality disorder." Readers told me about spouses and friends who were discharged under similar circumstances. Doctors wrote me aghast at the clear-cut nature of the military's misdiagnoses.

Meanwhile the personality disorder stories kept rolling in. I'm now investigating the case of one soldier who damaged the lens of his eyeball in Iraq, damage his doctor said was caused by a pre-existing personality disorder.

Most readers asked how they could help. I advised them to forward the article to family and friends, to their Congressional representatives and to Representative Bob Filner, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Having worked on this story for seven months now, it's clear to me that the scandal won't be resolved until the wounded soldiers get a chance to tell their stories in open hearings, on camera, directly to the American people.

Some readers decided not to wait. They have been reaching out to Specialist Town directly:

"The continuous phone calls and e-mails that I get from random people—it's amazing to see how many people care," Town says. "You'll be having one of those days where you just want to crawl back in bed. Then someone calls and says, 'Hey, I read the article. What can I do for you?' It really does brighten your day."

Congressional action to address the personality disorder scandal is beginning—slowly. I'll have details on those developments and developments in Specialist Town's case in an upcoming *Nation* article. JOSHUA KORS

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Revolutionary Devotion

ROBERTO GONZÁLEZ ECHEVARRÍA

CÉSAR VALLEJO: The Complete Poetry, a Bilingual Edition.
Edited and translated by Clayton Eshleman. California. 717 pp. $49.95.

César Vallejo's work is as brief and intense as his life was. Like Byron and Rimbaud, he has acquired a mystique as one of poetry's romantic martyrs. On April 15, 1938, Good Friday, practically destitute and a mere 46, Vallejo died in Paris, the obligatory place for such a sacrifice by a Latin American, after years of poverty, despair, family and amorous disasters, and wearying political activism. While very different from one another, Vallejo, a Peruvian; Pablo Neruda, a Chilean; Rafael Alberti, a Spaniard; and Nicolás Guillén, a Cuban, were the preeminent Spanish-language political poets of the twentieth century. All honed their ideas and craft on the grinding stone of the Spanish Civil War. Vallejo, the most committed of them all, did not live to see its bitter end.

He was born in Santiago de Chuco, a small town in the Andes of northern Peru, in 1892. Both of his grandfathers were Spanish priests; both of his grandmothers, their native concubines. Vallejo would always profess pained pride in his Indian background, and not a few Quechua echoes reverberate in his poems. He went through secondary education in the provinces and twice started university studies only to drop out for lack of funds. Eventually he finished a bachelor's degree in philosophy and letters in 1915 at Trujillo, with a thesis on Spanish Romantic poetry. Three years later Vallejo published his first collection of verse, *Los heraldos negros* (The black heralds), which brought him some attention and helped him pick up jobs teaching and writing for newspapers. In Lima Vallejo joined the artistic and intellectual avant-garde, which became politically radicalized as conditions in Peru deteriorated.

There is an extraordinary depth to Peruvian culture as well as a profound sense of pathos, qualities that Vallejo embodied and of which he practically became the emblem. Like Mexico, Peru was an ostentatious viceroyalty in the colonial age, with Lima, the City of Kings, its crown jewel. The presence of advanced Andean cultures, particularly that of the Incas, prodded the Spaniards, who conquered the country in 1533, to invest heavily in boastful displays of their power and to implant Catholicism deeply into native consciousness. Precious metals, especially silver, subsidized all this grandeur and also helped the Spanish monarchy back home to stay financially afloat.

A local oligarchy soon replaced the Spanish one after independence in 1824, but the region remained starkly stratified along racial lines. Indigenous Peruvians,

Communism, Peruvian Catholicism and radical Modernism met fortuitously on the dissecting table of César Vallejo's poetry.

Vallejo's maternal ancestors, were literally at the bottom of this hierarchy, working in extremely harsh conditions in the depths of the mines. Peru's elite families ruled the country through a series of strongmen, buoyed by the transitory bonanza provided by guano and nitrates, which helped to perpetuate class warfare. The financial windfall stopped, however, after Chile humiliated Peru in the War of the Pacific (1879–83), occupying Lima and lopping off some territories. By the beginning of the twentieth century, when Vallejo was coming of age, Peru appeared ripe for political upheaval. Its population was more than half Indian, and the rest, of mixed blood, was topped off by a small percentage of whites of Spanish and European origin. The unevenly modernized economy was unstable. A parallel situation led Mexico to

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revolution in 1910, but Peru could not yet break free of its entrenched authoritarian past.

Spanish colonization in Peru was a stunted process, a standoff in which local cults survived alongside a zealous Catholic Church. The old viceregal bureaucracy had changed sovereigns but not its procedures and had not lost its hold on Peruvians. Vallejo's thesis on Spanish Romantic poetry was a good example of the respect, even reverence, for Spanish culture in the Peru of his youth. As in other Latin American countries—like Colombia, Venezuela and, in the north, Mexico—bullfighting and other games from colonial times have endured. The persistence of the ancien régime can be felt even in the ceremoniously solemn way that Peruvians speak Spanish. Formal and punctilious in its lexicon and grammar, Peruvian Spanish reflects the unwavering religious faith that structures the nation's soul, even at its most rebellious. Vallejo's defiance came at a high price, causing him anguish that found expression in his poetry.

Vallejo's political consciousness was awakened in 1918, the same year that he published *Los heraldos negros*, and one year after Mexico's revolution ended. A revolt of university students in Córdoba, Argentina, spread to all of Latin America, including Peru. This was a turning point in the political history of the entire former Spanish empire, whose universities were still governed by colonial methods and ideas. Vallejo, doing postgraduate work in Lima, was involved in some of the unrest, though he was mostly occupied with a tempestuous love affair, the first of several. But his rebellious political nature was finding encouragement and nurture.

Along with José Carlos Mariátegui and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, two of the most influential Peruvian intellectuals of the century, Vallejo was a disciple of Manuel González Prada (1848–1918), an inspiring teacher who directed the National Library from 1912 to 1918. González Prada had dared to write:

> In Peru, there exist two great lies: the republic and Christianity. We talk about civil rights…and most Peruvians have no security in their freedom or their lives. We talk about Christian charity…and stand by consenting to the crucifixion of a race. Our Catholicism is an inferior paganism, without greatness in its philosophy or magnificence in its art; our form of government should be called an extension of the Conquest and the Viceroyalty.

Mariátegui, a brilliant and probing essayist, was a Communist with a mystical streak who was fond of quoting Nietzsche. He railed against the concentration of lands in a few hands and *gamonalismo*, "bossism." A lame and infirm man who died at 35 in 1930, Mariátegui exerted an enormous influence on his and Vallejo's generation of students, leading many to Communism. Spurning Communism, Haya de la Torre (1895–1979) founded the APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana), the most powerful political party in twentieth-century Peru; Haya de la Torre was a thorn in the side of numerous Peruvian presidents, most often from exile. A populist whose influence could be felt throughout the region, he called for the nationalization of land and industry, for the formation of a common front of workers and intellectuals and for the unity of "Indo-America," as he called Latin America. Mariátegui and Haya de la Torre represented the two revolutionary poles in Peru during the 1920s and '30s. Vallejo followed Mariátegui rather than Haya de la Torre, joining the Communist Party in Paris, where he resettled in 1923 after a political incident that landed him briefly in jail. But his Communism, like Mariátegui's, was anything but orthodox. There would be the obligatory trips to the Soviet Union, from which he is reported to have returned disenchanted, and long periods of political work in war-torn Spain, where he taught Marxism, wrote for newspapers and translated books and articles. Vallejo would never return home, but he carried Peru within him.

Los heraldos negros is a book written under the sway of Modernismo, not just that of the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío but also that of the Argentine Leopoldo Lugones's *Lunario sentimental* (Sentimental lunar calendar) (1909). It is a turning point in Latin American poetry, the birth of modern avant-garde poetry (what in English is called Modern, or belonging to Modernism). Vallejo broke with syntactical and prosodic conventions, making his verse difficult to grasp, even by comparison with Darío's most radical work, which was deep and somber but still fairly accessible. Vallejo's despair expressed itself through tortured grammar and shocking figures. *Los heraldos negros* had an apocalyptic hopelessness characteristic of poetry written after World War I, which is evident in the very title of the book. Something at the core of Western civilization had collapsed, and art had to reflect it, not cover it with a veil of beauty. The first lines of *Los heraldos negros*, which have become a commonplace expression of gloom in the Spanish language, set the tone:

> Hay golpes en la vida, tan fuertes… Yo no sé!
> Golpes como del odio de Dios; como si ante ellos,
> la resaca de todo lo sufrido
> se empozara en el alma… Yo no sé!

This is rendered by Clayton Eshleman thus in *César Vallejo: The Complete Poetry*:

> There are blows in life, so powerful… I don't know!
> Blows as from the hatred of God; as if, facing them,
> the undertow of everything suffered
> welled up in the soul… I don't know!

The anguish expressed here is not just pervasive and vague; it is also personal, contingent: grief for the death of a brother, for instance, or for that of a beloved. The beauty of despair in Vallejo's poetry lies in its intimacy but also in its fervor and intensity, the sense the poet conveys of having been betrayed by God and all the useless religious rituals and prayers.

Vallejo's next book, *Trilce* (1922), was even more daring than *Los heraldos negros*. It is the Latin American *vanguardista* book of poems par excellence, the benchmark of modern poetry in Spanish. Its very title is already an indication of its wildly inventive poetics: "trilce" is a made-up word whose root and meaning critics have been debating since the book's publication. It is as if Vallejo were saying that he is creating not just poetry but language itself.

Trilce combines breathtakingly innovative poetic discourse with everyday language. Syntax and spelling are deliberately flouted, making meaning difficult if not impossible to fathom. Nothing like it had been written before in Spanish, and very few poets (with the possible exception of the Cuban José Lezama Lima) would ever match such originality. *Trilce* was a massive catharsis; it seems as if it was a voiding of Vallejo's poetic soul. This, added to the convulsion wrought by Vallejo's political awakening, may have been what led him to decide against publishing another book of poems. The crisis that prompted this silence could also very well have been the clash between his elusive avant-garde verse and the pressures of his Communist commitment to write poetry for "the masses"—one more con-

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By John Fleming

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flict added to the many personal problems he suffered as a result of his turbulent love life.

Vallejo's best work was to appear posthumously, in *Poemas humanos*, a book edited and titled by his widow. *Poemas humanos* is perhaps the finest collection in modern Spanish poetry, rivaling those of Lorca, Neruda and Paz. It contains poems from the 1920s up to Vallejo's death and includes those written during the Spanish Civil War; the poetry often glides off into prose—densely poetic prose, but prose. It is as if Vallejo aspired to remake poetry from everyday speech about everyday things, rejecting any language anointed as poetry; he preferred to reach poetry only after having gone through prose and the prosaic. The poems are about ordinary lives, including his own, commonplace settings and situations that nonetheless contain transcendental messages about suffering, time, the banality of existence, the randomness of evil and sorrow, the experience of human misery. I suppose this is the reason for the title, which suggests a contrast with "divine," of worldly with heavenly. Pain, existence, feeling—all are so general as to lack specificity, as in:

> I believed until now that all things of the universe were, inevitably, fathers or children. But behold that my pain today is neither father nor child. It lacks a back to dusk, as well as having too much chest to dawn and if they put it in a dark room, it would not give light and if they put it in a brightly lit room, it would cast no shadow. Today I suffer come what may. Today I simply suffer. [Eshleman, with my own alterations]

The Complete Poetry contains another collection, whose title poem, "España, aparta de mí este cáliz" (Spain, take this cup from me), is dedicated to the defenders of the Spanish Republic, where the poems were printed but never bound in 1938. The *cáliz* is the cup used by a priest for the consecrated wine and host during the mass; the Catholicism of Vallejo's youth, of Peru, continued to permeate his consciousness despite his political evolution.

España, aparta de mí este cáliz features the most powerful, poignant, beautiful political poetry in the Spanish language; it ranks with the best written during the Spanish Civil War by great poets from many lands, and it evokes the artistic masterpiece of the war, Picasso's *Guernica*. It has the same apocalyptic force of the picture, a cry so loud against violence that it transcends partisanship. The tone is appropriately prophetic, with distinct echoes from the Book of Revelation (the title, however, is from Matthew 26:39), with crescendos of emotion conveyed by escalating anaphora, and a meaning that issues from the accretion of figures, some of amazing originality. A few poems are new versions of common prayers, like the "Our Father." The book, which moves from battle to battle, reflects the gloom of the concluding moments of the war, when the defeat of the Republic was all but certain. No one has expressed better the impact of metal against flesh, or more movingly the death of ordinary men, particularly peasants, whose understanding of the conflict is more telluric than intellectual, and who enter death with stoic resignation. But Vallejo goes further than depicting human conflict and suffering. In his poems there is a generalized battle among things animate and inanimate, a whirling of matter in a state of chaos that is simply dazzling.

One could argue that Vallejo's oddity—his freshness—lies in his penchant for catachresis, not catechism, for the "misuse" of language (all poetry is a form of catachresis). Perhaps catachresis in Vallejo is the site of the clash between the local and the cosmopolitan, between the preened colonial Spanish language of Peru and the broken language of the natives, laced with Quechua words, inflections and even syntax. If this were the case, Vallejo would be repeating the tactic of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, the seventeenth-century Incan chronicler whose 1,200-page history of colonial Peru, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (The first new chronicle and primer on good government), was masterfully edited by my Yale colleague Rolena Adorno. Guaman Poma, who argued for the restitution of Inca rule but under Catholicism, wrote in a highly poetic, deeply flawed Spanish that carried its urgent message all the more effectively because of its jolting incorrectness.

Vallejo protests against God, not against religion, in a manner that recalls, above all, the Spanish poet and philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. Yet in this he is more thoroughly Peruvian than he would be if he renounced or denied religion, which would be not merely unthinkable (even for a Communist) but banal. One can hear in his poems religious strains similar to Eliot's, whose "The Waste Land" is contemporaneous with Vallejo's mature poetry. But Eliot is melancholy, bourgeois in his sense of despair, except at the end of his poem, where the tone is cosmic, apocalyptic. Vallejo is more defiant and irreverent. His struggle with God is provoked by love as well as hatred, and his language is uniformly solemn and harsh, devoid of Eliot's showy allusiveness and academic priggishness.

More like Pound, Vallejo twists and turns a poetic language that does not borrow from other discourses except perhaps that of the Gospels. Like most Latin American writers who grew up in the church, Vallejo doubtless acquired this biblical tone from the endless sermons he must have heard in his school days rather than from reading the New Testament. More than his contemporary James Joyce, another word-masher with a Catholic background, Vallejo toys dangerously with total formlessness; his work dispenses with the mythical ambitions that give shape to Joyce's *Ulysses*. The only overarching myth in Vallejo is Christianity, but it is vague and not sharply defined.

Poem Windy and Continued

very cold. My small
and panicked last
kiss was like making
a noise to make sure
I was there.

Your quiet
mouth was only
space—a kiss
reversed and kept
inside to bite.

Graham Foust

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César Vallejo: The Complete Poetry is likely to be the only complete English Vallejo we will have for a long time. Given the difficulties of Vallejo's verse and the devotion it demands from the translator, I doubt that another Clayton Eshleman will emerge in the foreseeable future. The comprehensiveness of the collection, thanks to Eshleman's careful and reliable scholarship, is admirable, perhaps unsurpassable, at least in English. Still, there is something unsatisfying about the book, in large part because Eshleman's translations are not equal to his scholarship.

Eshleman is an American poet whose love for Vallejo's poetry led him on a virtually lifelong quest to translate his work. In order to do this, he had to secure permission from Vallejo's widow to publish and convince editorial houses to bring out the results. There is pathos in his protracted efforts, which he recounts in an afterword: first because they tell the story of a creative vocation surrendered to the work of another poet; second because Eshleman's pursuit of native speakers who would help him unravel Vallejo's idiosyncratic Spanish is touchingly earnest but somewhat quixotic.

I know of this because, although Eshleman may not remember, I was one of his native informants very early in his pursuit of Vallejo. I was a graduate student at Indiana University in 1965 when Eshleman contacted me to work with him on the translation. In return he would help me read Wallace Stevens, whom I was studying in a seminar and whose English was beyond my comprehension at the time (that was the beginning of my obsession with Stevens). I cannot remember how long our collaboration lasted, but I was struck by Eshleman's determination, despite having so little command of Spanish, to read Vallejo, and I wondered how Eshleman had become fascinated with Vallejo's poetry earlier, when he had even less. But even a native speaker is on very unsure ground reading Vallejo; to think that native competency would solve the problem betrayed a bit of desperation.

Although chronologies usually contain inert information lacking a critical or meaningful narrative thread, I found the one by Stephen Hart the best part of the book, other than the poetry. The author of a solid book in Spanish on Vallejo, Hart has provided an accurate, rich and relevant chronology (criticism in English is crude; in Spanish, just a tad better). A reader should begin with it before proceeding to Mario Vargas Llosa's skimpy foreword, Efraín Kristal's perfunctory introduction, Eshleman's essay and to the poetry.

Translation consists of a series of transactions in which there are gains and losses, because languages have noncorresponding literary virtues. Spanish tends to be sententious because of its Latin roots; English succinct and blunt with its brief, sharp words. Spanish adverbs ending in *-mente* are clunky (*oscuramente*), while English is blessed with the swift and melodious *-ly* (darkly). English's long vowels are murky but musical; Spanish's clipped syllables are rhythmic, sometimes overly so. In general, the greatest difference between the two languages and the pitfall for most translators from Spanish to English is that words with Latin roots in Spanish are natural and commonplace, whereas in English they tend to be abstract and formal. Eshleman is generally good, but his word choices are occasionally wrong, and there are some incongruities between the tone of the original and that of the translation.

For instance, the second line of the poem about the death of Vallejo's brother Miguel reads "donde nos haces una falta sin fondo!" This powerful expression of grief, punctuated by the alliteration, means "where our need of you is bottomless," but Eshleman turns it into a postcard cliché: "where we miss you terribly!" The poem titled "Romería" should not have been called "Pilgrimage," although one could be led to believe that to be the proper translation, since Rome is a traditional destination for pilgrims. But *romería*, in Spanish, drifted toward meaning a picnic or aimless stroll through the fields, which is what it means in this poem—only the stroll is through a cemetery. A more complicated problem, in *Trilce*, is the line "galoneándome de ceros a la izquierda," rendered by Eshleman as "to galloon myself with zeroes on the left." *Galón* in Spanish means a stripe indicating rank on a military uniform, and zeroes on the left, worthless numbers, being to the left of the decimal point. This self-deprecating line means that he is "adding worthless stripes of rank to himself."

There are fine moments in the translation, as in this stunning stanza in which Vallejo links time to the body's position and movement through space:

> Could very well take root all this.
> But one tomorrow without tomorrow,
> between the rings of which we become
> widowers,
> a margin of mirror there will be
> where I run through my own front
> until the echo is lost
> and I'm left with my front toward my
> back.

Or earlier, in *Los heraldos negros*, when Vallejo makes this proclamation

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of his troubled Andean roots:

> I am the fledgling condor plucked
> by a Latin harquebus;
> and flush with humanity I float in the
> Andes
> like an everlasting Lazarus of light.

Translations are not just transactions; they are also compromises. No matter how generous we want to be, no matter how dismissive of the power of originals and of the real poets who wrote them, translations, particularly poetic translations, can never be a substitute for the poems as they were created and written. Without Spanish, a reader will never be able to enjoy Vallejo fully or even sufficiently. English-language readers of Vallejo will have to make do with what this book offers them, which is quite a lot but, alas, not quite Vallejo. ■

Infantile Liberalism

RUSSELL JACOBY

CONSUMED: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole. By Benjamin Barber. Norton. 406 pp. $26.95.

"I encourage you all to go shopping more," advised President Bush at a press conference last winter. Shop and prime the pump, goes the idea. Spring for a plasma television set and spur more production and employment. The newly employed go to the mall to pick up more goodies and widen the circle of production and employment. At least Wall Street is following orders. Its million-dollar end-of-the-year bonuses caused a flurry of shopping. Young hedge fund analysts were "scooping" up $2 million to $3 million "starter" apartments. Things were tougher in Connecticut, where a car dealer lamented a waiting list of fifty for $250,000 Ferraris.

Of course, there are always naysayers, unconvinced that shopping will lead to universal prosperity. These included the cleaning staff at the London branch of Goldman Sachs, where the bonuses were highest. While the financial house handed out gifts that averaged $600,000—and often reached millions—its custodians contemplated going on strike. With their hourly wage they would attain the average bonus in twenty-two years. Of course, at the end of twenty-two years, they would have spent that amount on life and its necessities.

The idea that individual consumption drives the economy has a long pedigree. It seems intuitively obvious. Without people wanting and buying iPods, there will be no iPod assembly workers, ergo, no economy. One fellow, now forgotten—a freelancer who wrote for the defunct *New York Daily Tribune*—challenged this. Karl Marx focused on production, not consumption. Insofar as capitalism sought to minimize the amount of labor it needed, Marx noted, it proved to be extraordinarily productive; fewer workers produced more goods. Yet it also proved vulnerable to crises of overproduction. As the industrial apparatus becomes more efficient and requires fewer workers, it undercuts itself. After all, the workers themselves are part of the market. If they are unemployed, they buy little or nothing and the commodities go unsold. The specter of overproduction haunts the modern economy, which responds in several ways: by selling goods to new consumers (say, baby formula to breast feeders); by selling more goods to existing consumers (say, bigger television sets to television set owners); and by selling more goods to the government (say, aircraft carriers and Hummers to the military).

Advertising addresses the first two markets and insures that no one escapes the imperative of consumption. Even the exits lead to the checkout counter. Advertising cannot put money into the pockets of shoppers, but it can create a need to consume out of unformed insecurities and desires. Sales of Listerine mouthwash skyrocketed in the 1920s when its manufacturer promoted the term "halitosis" and encouraged all to think they suffered from chronic bad breath: "Even your closest friends won't tell you." At least they did not tell tragic "Edna," who remained unmarried at 30, the victim of bad breath. "Often a bridesmaid but never a bride," ran the famous advert for the mouthwash. Not only Edna benefited from Listerine but so, presumably, did the workers who produced and packaged it.

Benjamin Barber, a political theorist and author of *Jihad vs. McWorld*, wades into the debate on shopping and advertising in *Consumed*. His is an ambitious book that seeks to define a period as well as to outline forms of resistance, which include a new type of global citizenship. A century ago German sociologist Max Weber attributed the rise of capitalism to a new religious spirit, a Protestant ethos of saving and hard work. That argument has yielded a small library of elaborations and refutations. Barber, who is not exactly a shrinking violet, seeks to revise Weber with an idea equally "provocative and controversial"—the notion of an "infantilist ethos." Once upon a time capitalism, driven by a Protestant spirit, "shaped a culture conducive to work and investment," serving nations and citizens, but today a consumerist capitalism, driven by an "infantilist ethos," "shapes a culture conducive to laxity, shopping, and spending," turning us into hapless shoppers and in the process gutting democracy. Not only have children and teens become a vast consuming market but adults no longer grow up: "Aging adults remain youth consumers throughout their lives."

But what exactly is the "infantilist ethos" that Barber offers as his contribution to the vast literature on consumption? "Infantilization aims at inducing puerility in adults and preserving what is childish in children trying to grow up." Unfortunately, this does not take us very far. Barber offers a series of what he calls dyads that "capture infantilization": easy over hard, simple over complex and fast over slow. "Easy versus hard acts as a template for much of what distinguishes the childish from the adult." We have "easy listening" and "shopping made easy," which "promote commercial products" attuned to the attention span and tastes of the young. Yet Barber's heart is not in this. He prefers maundering on about political thinkers, not psyching out infantilization. One paragraph after announcing the "easy over hard" dyad, he informs us that "the preference for easy plays off of modern utilitarian ideas," which allows Barber to discourse on Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. How could this be? Are modern capitalists reading Bentham and Mill? Are children?

Barber's dyads seem questionable. "The preference for the simple over the complex is evident in domains dominated by simpler tastes—fast food and moronic movies, revved-up spectator sports and dumbed-

Russell Jacoby, a professor of history at UCLA, is the author of The Last Intellectuals, Dialectic of Defeat *and other works. His most recent book is* Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age *(Columbia).*

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down video games." Yet is this infantilization? It seems more plausible to argue the opposite. Nothing is especially "simple" about fast food and action movies; they are constructed by adults with the most advanced know-how. Nor is "simple" something to be censured. On the contrary. Classic childhood games—hopscotch, hide and seek—were simple and required nothing except vigor and imagination. Simple food is often excellent. Compare a meal based on garlic sizzling in olive oil, cheese and pasta with a meal from a trip to a Subway sandwich franchise, with a choice of seven breads (all the same) and fifteen varieties of subs, each of which allows numerous options in condiments and toppings. That's complicated.

The genius of capitalism turns the simple and easy—meals, relationships, joy—into things complicated and hard; it commodifies all of life. With a click of the mouse and a credit card number it also offers instant pleasures. What once could be done outside the market—for instance, games and sports—now requires money and purchases. "Infantilization" may actually signal the demise of the infant. Adult fashion and sexuality now encompass children and preteens. This suggests not the triumph of the infant but the triumph of adult marketing.

Infantilization, for Barber, is a catchphrase that he does not really analyze. Rather, he turns to what he calls "affiliated ideologies" of privatization, branding and total marketing, which promote hyperconsumerism. Here, where Barber feels more at home, he ranges far and wide; he reviews the fetish of everything private—housing, roads, schools, security—and the suspicion of everything public. He surveys the omnipresence of brands and "lifestyle" advertising in American life. He outlines the supremacy of the market. But while Barber is a thoughtful guide, he is not an especially incisive one, and often the drone of the political science professor takes over: "There are five forms of market domination that constitute the substance of my argument… I will argue that the consumer market is *ubiquitous* (it is everywhere); that it is *omnipresent* (it is 'all the time')…it is *addictive* (it creates its own forms of reinforcement)…it is *self-replicating* (it spreads virally); and it is *omnilegitimate* (it engages in active self-rationalization and self-justification)." *Pssst!* What time is class over?

In the last section of the book Barber sketches out "a moderate and democratic way" to resist consumer capitalism. He wants to restore capitalism to "its primary role" as an efficient producer and to uphold the "democratic public" as the regulator of "our plural life worlds." But the weakness of his ideas shows through his PowerPoint presentations. He locates three types of consumer resistance and subversion: "I will discuss them under the rubrics cultural creolization, cultural carnivalization and cultural jamming." By creolization, he means the effort to turn market brands against the market, where commodification serves heretical groups or movements, like Hasidic rock, in which ultra-orthodox Gad Elbaz sets pious lyrics to throbbing rhythms. By "jamming" Barber means tactics derived mainly from Kalle Lasn, founder of *Adbusters* magazine. In Lasn's words, the jammers paint their "own bike lanes, reclaim streets, 'skull' Calvin Klein ads, and paste GREASE stickers on tables and trays at McDonald's restaurants."

The last Leninists may scoff at such stuff: What does this have to do with overcoming capitalism? This would be unfair. In an airless political universe, any sparks should be appreciated. However, it wouldn't be unfair to wonder at the sharp limits of this cultural subversion, about which Barber is well aware. As soon as he introduces his forms of cultural resistance, he notes how easily they get incorporated into the market. A coffee chain in India that challenges Starbucks—to Barber, inexplicably, an example of creolization—looks very much like an Indian Starbucks. The *Adbuster* jammers have launched their own brand of athletic sneakers, which takes on Nike. The "Unswoosher" not only is union-made and "earthly friendly" but comes with a red "sweet spot" on the toe "for kicking corporate ass." Nice, but isn't this just another hip brand, as subversive as Ben and Jerry's or Whole Foods?

In addition to his three forms of cultural resistance Barber comes up with other, more disparate, perhaps desperate, efforts to rein in the market—such as consumer activism (dolphin-safe tuna), creative video games (SimCity) and especially George Clooney movies (*Good Night, and Good Luck* and *Syriana*). Barber is only the latest progressive to go gaga over Hollywood. He dreams its milquetoast offerings are revolutionary provocations. Movies like *Bulworth*, with Warren Beatty, and *American Dreamz*, with Hugh Grant, demonstrate Hollywood's "own dialectical capacity to generate rebellion and subversion." It is more likely that they demonstrate Barber's capacity for wishful thinking. The ravages of the market in the impoverished Third World also catch Barber's attention—at least for ten pages. Here too he finds countermovements or partial remedies like Doctors Without Borders's 500-calorie Plumpy Nut bar, which is "a miracle cure for the starving," and Nobel Prize–winning economist Muhammad Yunus's idea of microcredits for the very poor.

No one can fault Barber's earnestness, humanism or goodwill, but his book is spongy—soft in its prose, edges and center. He only half believes and half pursues his thesis on infantilization. Weber's notion of the Protestant ethic remains safe; and for an analysis of what drives consumption, the *New York Daily Tribune* freelancer is a better bet. The acts of consumer resistance that Barber highlights, however salutary, amount to little; and his reflections on the global market, its disasters and imperfect antidotes, like the Plumpy Nut, lack conviction.

Barber refers more than once to a "fiendishly simple method of trapping monkeys in Africa" as a metaphor for consumer capitalism. In this trap a nut can be accessed through a single small hole in a closed and secure box. The hole is too small to allow the monkey's fist to withdraw and the monkey will not release the treat. Hunters come by "hours or even days later, because the monkey—driven by desire—will not relinquish the nut. It will die first (and often does)." For Barber "consumers are capitalism's one-trick monkeys.… With the infantilist ethos stroking their desires, inside the infantilist monkey trap they find themselves unable to let go."

In its clunky prose this is pure Barber, but there is another problem. The "infantilist" monkey trap is itself a myth. Monkeys do not die in these traps, and they flee when hunters approach; consumers may be equally wise. Perhaps this does not matter, but it may illustrate something of Barber's less-than-rigorous approach. His indubitably well-intentioned book represents not hard-hitting social commentary but soft-core liberalism.

He concludes by calling for "a transnational citizenry" in which citizens reassert their control over the global market. This would entail putting "the trump card back into the hand of the public." As usual, Barber's language turns flabby. The new citizenship, he explains, "relies on innovative forms of traditional commons, including new information rooted in new technologies." The problem is not the weak prose but the anemic ideas. Barber believes he is offering a bold "utopian dream." But where is the utopia? His goal of "democratizing globalization" and restoring "the balance between citizens and consumers" suggests tinkering, not transformation. At his best, Barber gives us decaf liberalism brewed with fair-trade coffee. ■

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Discovery/*The Nation* '07 Prizewinners

The Nation *announces the winners of Discovery*/The Nation *'07, the Joan Leiman Jacobson Poetry Prize of The Unterberg Poetry Center, 92nd Street Y. Now in its thirty-third year, it is an annual contest for poets whose work has not been published previously in book form. The new winners are Paula Bohince, Darcie Dennigan, Joseph Heithaus and Melissa Range. This year's judges are Mark Jarman, Brigit Pegeen Kelly and Phillis Levin. Associate coordinator Elise Paschen helped to screen. As in the past, manuscripts are judged anonymously. Distinguished former winners of Discovery*/The Nation *include Michael Collier, Susan Mitchell, Katha Pollitt, Mary Jo Salter, Sherod Santos, Arthur Smith, Ann Townsend, Brigit Pegeen Kelly and Philip Schultz. This year's Discovery*/The Nation *event, featuring readings by the four winners, is scheduled for 8:15 PM on Monday, May 7, at The Unterberg Poetry Center, 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Avenue (92nd Street and Lexington Avenue), in New York City.* —*Grace Schulman, contest coordinator*

Green

The child affixes one of her little pictures to my refrigerator.
She asks, Can you detect the radiation?

There is a house, one tree, and grass in dark slashes. A sun
shining. Beneath, in her child letters, she has written *Chernobyl*.

At kindergarten they must be having nuclear energy week.

One could look at the picture and say everything is in order.
No, I say, I cannot see the radiation.

The radiation poison, she says, sits inside the apple
and the apple looks pretty.

She sings, Bury the apple and bury the shovel that buried the apple
and put the apple-burier person in a closet forever.

We both know how the poison goes. We are both thinking *Bury the burier*.
Both thinking of her picture with no people.

The poison sits inside the people and the people
still look pretty, she says. Still, she says, sweetly, Away with them.

The child is not a flincher, which is why I love to tell her stories:

Of the poisonous man who tumbled into the cold sea
and turned the sea poignant.
For his bones glowed in the cold deep like dying coral.
His ribcage was a cave for small, lost fish.
Flecks of his glowing skin joined with green algae
on the sea surface, where, on a boat, his widow choked
as she looked down the sun shaft for her husband's poison body.

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What is sunlight through seawater most like
but the strange green fire
that burnt the man?
—Who had worked atop a steel hill until a whale—
a great green whale—bumped into the continental shelf
and the steel hill cracked and its poison leaked out.
And the man began to melt…

What I am jealous of in the child, what I am really starting to detest in her
is how she nods

with kindergarten grace and finality. Primly, into her pinafore,
she tucks what I've told of the story.

On the refrigerator her picture looks so pretty.
There is no end to the green or pollen or the feeling of the bees coming.

Or of a hill and sky of poison.

On fire, the man working on the reactor must have looked wavy—
like a man trying to ride a humpback through the fast green sea.

Her picture on the refrigerator looks so pretty.

When I wake her from her nap I will ask
if the dark green slashes are meant to be radiance, not plain grass.

Darcie Dennigan

Green False Hellebore

Veratrum woodii

We must warn the good sheep: Dear pregnant ewes,
stay away from the *stout, erect, unbranched*
stems, pleated leaves, flowers B inconspicuous
clusters, green or greenish white. I blanched

at what they do to you, your little lamb.
If you eat false hellebore on the fourteenth
day of gestation, expect your new ram
to be *monkey-faced, cycloptic*, come a month

early or die. Really, aside from weakness,
trembling, the stomach ache you'll feel, you'll give
birth to truth, small brained, defected, helpless,
just for taking what you thought sheep might live

on. This is nature's justice, something cruel
to chew: we're empty headed beasts, poison's fool.

Joseph Heithaus

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The Workhorse

—after a song by My Brightest Diamond

His every hair and shred
sheds two uses, or more, for our daily bread.

Good sidekick, stock stand-by,
he helps us tear the ground and haul the rye.

Too much sweetgrass made him lame,
or we did; too much bridle made him tame,

which we did. Nails in his foot
mean he's not good-for-naught;

disease in the hoof, he's a no-shoe
no-show on the field. It's a no-go,

when he founders on the clock:
he'll go free, barefooted, to the block.

Bring me the workhorse; bring me
the pack-mule, the breeder, the gee-

upped whip-smart; I'll end their agony.
Bring me the betted-out racehorse, the pony,

petted and stunted, that made money on the bit,
stumping round a ring. Bring me the unfit,

the falterer, the one who wouldn't take
the halter, the bucker none could break.

Bring me the tons of shoe-iron,
and may the miners leave the mine;

bring me the saddles and the reins,
and may the cattle keep their skins.

Workhorse, pale horse, ghosthorse dead to striving,
bring me the toil of the living

that never rests, that after death still labors—
bones fixing glitter onto shiny paper.

Melissa Range

Hide Out

Stiff as a fish
in a boat, I lie in the grove
of crabapples,
inhaling dirt's pepper, my cheek
wet against stubble,
eye to mineral eye,

tracing the bodies of fish
onto woods' floor—infinity in mud,
curves of hourglass
repeating—

until I cannot hear
my breathing,

until the figure beside the barn,
aerating hay, becomes
a stranger no bigger
than a finger, his pitchfork a flimsy sliver,
harmless rhythm.

When bronze begins to erase
my drawings, pleats the elephant
leaf, when he vanishes,

I grip the girlish cheeks
of crabapple
and pound them and pound them
against ground.

I eat their mush, the grit
pummeled into it,
to coax out the sadness that waits for me
each evening
and cannot be extinguished.

Paula Bohince

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EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL

Dubrovnik, Croatia

■ "Transforming Culture: From Empire to Global Community." June 3–9, Dubrovnik, Croatia. Since the 2007 Praxis conference will be held in Europe, we will highlight some of the most advanced examples of cultural transformation and sustainability that are being practiced and developed in Europe today. From the Mondragon Cooperatives in Spain to alternative energy in Denmark, we will showcase projects that demonstrate seventh-generation, life-affirming values. The conference will feature outstanding thinkers and doers, practical workshops, networking, small-group cafe discussions and even vacation time in one of the world's most beautiful sites. Speakers include: Tom Hayden, Frances Moore Lappé, George Lakoff, Hazel Henderson, Thom Hartmann, Riane Eisler, David Korten, Johan Galtung, European members of Parliament and more. More information on our website: www.praxispeace.org (click on Dubrovnik Conference '07). Or call (707) 939-2973.

NATIONAL

Economy Connection

■ War and global capitalism. Unemployment and recession. Wealth, poverty and inequality. Economy Connection, a project of the Union for Radical Political Economics, can provide speakers on these and related topics for formal or informal events sponsored by community groups, unions, high schools, colleges or political organizations. Contact us at (201) 792-7459 or soapbox@comcast.net.

NEW YORK

David Satcher MD, PhD

■ Wednesday, May 16, 7:30 PM. Physicians for a National Health Program NY Metro Chapter invites you to hear David Satcher MD, PhD, former US Surgeon General and current director of the Center of Excellence on Health Disparities at Morehouse School of Medicine, discuss "The Role of Health Care Reform in the Elimination of Health Care Disparities." Sixth-annual Joanne Lukomnik Forum. Weill Medical College of Cornell University, 1300 York Ave. at 69th St., New York City. Free. Reservations not required, but to assure a place send us your name. (212) 666-4001. Fax: (212) 866-5847. E-mail: pnhpnyc@igc.org.

Worker Education National Call

■ Storming the Heavens: Worker Education and Social Activism Commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the CUNY Centers for Worker Education. A conference for labor scholars, educators, trade unionists, current and former worker-students. June 1–2, 25 Broadway, New York City. Proposals are welcome for papers, presentations and panels exploring the history, politics and contemporary significance of Worker Education in the United States and abroad. Teachers, staff and students in worker-education programs are encouraged to contribute to the discourse reflecting their institutional and personal experiences and social impact. Labor scholars and trade unionists are especially encouraged to attend and/or participate. www.workereducation.org. (212) 966-4014.

Classified

While we reserve the right to edit, reject or reclassify any advertisement, The Nation *wishes its readers to know we don't have the facilities to check the promises made by our advertisers, and we have a strong presumption against censoring any advertisement, especially if we disagree with its politics.*

ANCIENT SECRETS

INCONTROVERTIBLE PROOF Josephus created fictional Jesus! Scholarly booklet $10. Box 5652-B, Kent, WA 98064. (Details: SASE).

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BLOGS/WEB

REJECTED LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. Expanding the Visible Spectrum of Ideas. Visit: www.rejectedletterstotheeditor.com.

WWW.FAMOUSWELSH.COM. www.jonesnyhistory.com.

STUDENTS—looking for a good study break? Visit *The Nation*'s new student web page at www.thenation.com/student. Here you can catch up on news from campuses around the country, request free magazines for your student events, contribute to a weekly online discussion board about controversial issues, read student-related *Nation* articles and keep abreast of upcoming *Nation*-sponsored student conferences, contests and public engagements.

BOOKS

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BUSH'S LEGACY? SEE JUDGMENT DAY, futuristic political thriller by S.P. Perone. "Reads like tomorrow's headlines." www.samperone.com.

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FILM

DEPLETED URANIUM—documentary DVD studying deformed and dying Iraqi children harmed by US military weapons. $9. WILPF-Santa Cruz PO Box 61, Santa Cruz, CA 95063.

GLOBAL POLICY

CONFERENCE ON WORLD AFFAIRS. CU Boulder April 2007, audio recordings are available from www.tapesagain.com/cwa2007.html. A unique conference held each year on a wide variety of interesting topics.

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ORGANIZATIONS

BOSTON AREA. *Nation* discussion group seeks new members! Please contact Sam Pilato, Sam@alcove.arlington.ma.us, (781) 643-0038.

ROCK HILL/FORT MILL, SOUTH CAROLINA, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact addgroup@comporium.net.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, *Nation* discussion group is forming. Please call Lois at (408) 365-1286 for further information.

DOVER, DELAWARE, *Nation* discussion group is forming. Contact Bruce Dudley if interested, (302) 697-6057.

BRADENTON/SARASOTA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets monthly. For further information call (941) 761-4873.

LOS ANGELES, CA, BRENTWOOD AREA. *Nation* discussion group forming. E-mail: bernlandis@verizon.net.

JOIN THE ATLANTA *Nation* discussion group! Contact John McDonough, (770) 594-8097. jmcdono@bellsouth.net.

HARTFORD DISCUSSION GROUP. They are still meeting on the first Sunday of the month between 2 and 4 PM, but they are now meeting at The Hartford Quaker Meeting House 144 S. Quaker Lane, West Hartford, CT (between Boulevard and Farmington Avenue).

MEMPHIS, TN, *Nation* discussion group forming. E-mail heidikenaga@yahoo.com if you're interested in joining.

RESTON, VA, *Nation* reading group forming. Contact Michael Causey for details. Families welcome! (703) 318-0147.

WASHINGTON, DC, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP going strong for fifth year. Join other *Nation* readers in DC area seeking to understand and change the world on third Saturday of every month at Cleveland Park Public Library from 3 to 5 PM. Coordinator: Bob Griss at (703) 272-7707 or Bgrisscdh@aol.com.

WOODLAND HILLS, CA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP. Contact Bailey, (818) 227-0076.

VALDOSTA, GA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP. E-mail Matthew, mateodega@hotmail.com.

RICHMOND, VA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. Please contact Jerry Gorman if you're interested in joining. (804) 266-7400; e-mail: gorfam@comcast.net.

WILLOW SPRINGS, NC, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP forming. E-mail Mollie Belcher at Mjb1009@msn.com for more information.

ORGANIZATIONS

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP! Contact Jim Hurley, (434) 973-4807.

BREVARD, NC, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING. E-mail Jim at JKeenen@aol.com or Don at GAIA@citcom.net.

THE *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP of the Inland Northwest is forming in the Cheney/Spokane area of eastern Washington. For information contact Gil Murray. (509) 235-1574; e-mail murraygil@aol.com.

PORTLAND/VANCOUVER *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets every second Sunday afternoon of the month. For more information, contact Mark Stephan at (971) 645-9113, e-mail pdxnation@hotmail.com.

SOUTH YORK COUNTY, ME, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. For further information please contact Herb. Call (207) 646-5431, e-mail pala@maine.rr.com.

PITTSBURGH *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP REFORMING under new direction. Please contact us again. Contact (412) 486-4791, or pghnationgroup@yahoo.com.

WESTERLY, RI, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP FORMING. Call Patricia at (401) 596-9341 or e-mail fineco@riconnect.com.

WHEELING, WV, *NATION* STUDY GROUP FORMING: This ad is legitimate and not a joke. Contact Dianne Burnham, (304) 232-0590.

CEDAR FALLS/WATERLOO, IA, *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP is forming. Phone Lou Hellwig at (319) 266-5363 or e-mail shellwig@cfu.net for more information.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

***NATION* STUDENT OUTREACH:** Attention student activists! If you're involved in organizing a progressive event, lecture or film festival on your campus or in your community and would like to distribute copies of *The Nation*, please let us know by calling (212) 209-5416.

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The Nation, Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003

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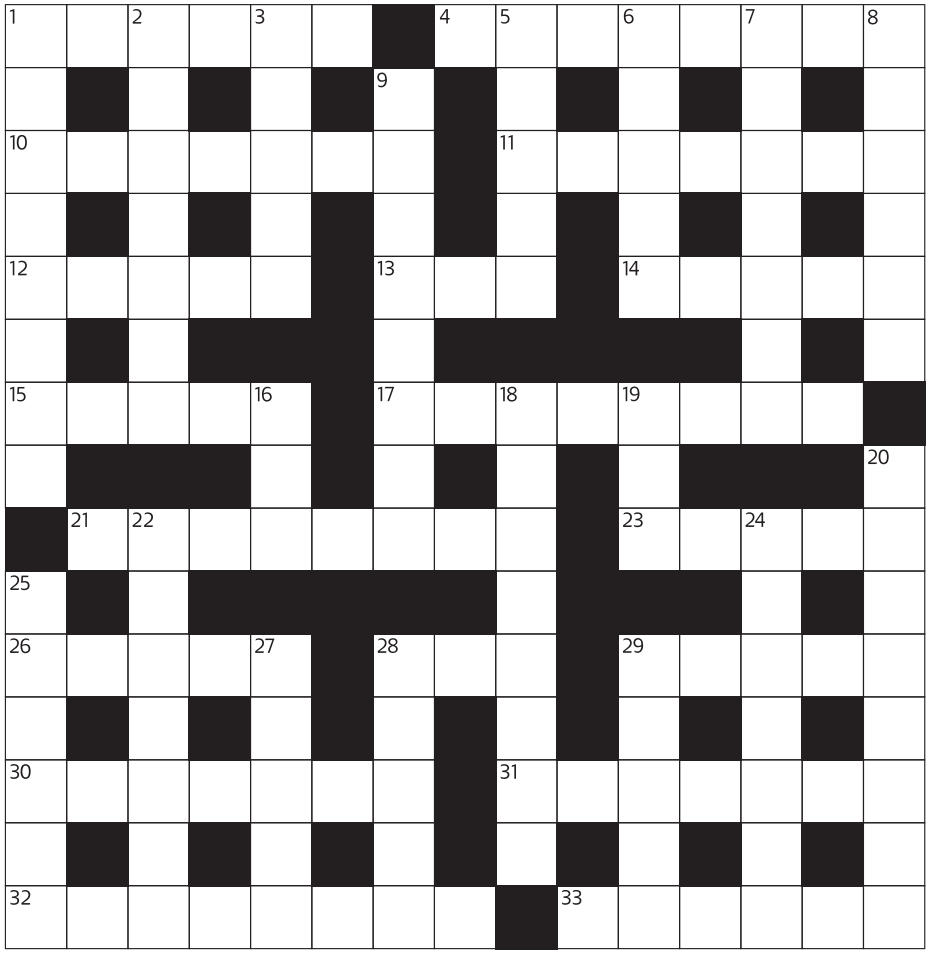
PUZZLE NO. 3082

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Those fancy wagons in the parade are aloft, possibly, to a point. (6)

4 Really wild types that hold the head of Liberia to show what the thrifty type does. (8)

10 You might make me come back mad in a place associated with Pirates, by name. (7)

11 So deep, I mix up part of the series. (7)

12, 13 and **29** Writers are said to put things down this way, but the result wouldn't be colorful. (5,3,5)

14 Mine Host, brought up to date—sounding as though he gets only a couple of letters. (5)

15 A man so named should be straight on the up-and-up. (5)

17 Cooked dessert, with the scruffy medic showing up everywhere! (8)

21 A mimic getting it, if it's just a bit of a drink. (8)

23 Could be one meaning concerning 10, more than occasionally. (5)

26 First to last, it could be tipped over, like a patsy. (3-2)

28 The villain in the oldies, in what America does. (3)

29 See 12

30 A large number made more red as the ceremonial staff. (7)

31 An important support to a version of the Bible that didn't start to be very readable. (7)

32 Were his accomplishments partly theoretical? (8)

33 How a minor auto accident might end up to get away from the margin. (6)

DOWN

1 It might be annoying in some systems to get the hay or oats returned. (8)

2 Nothing with the equipment given to a friend in Paris is like this fancy work! (7)

3 You might hope to be on the right one at such a meet. (5)

5 The morning seems to be over when you make change this way. (5)

6 Nothing in wrongdoing suggests what the medium of expression is supposed to have. (5)

7 Where you might find little dumplings is a cinch! Go wrong this way, however. (7)

8 The best players might be like some raisins—or lawns. (6)

9 Sort of aced with the bad mark of 33, which may be perverse, though refined. (8)

16 and **19** Trying to find the answer "in favor of the id"? Give up? (6)

18 In Castro's situation? If you're one of them, you won't believe what things are supposed to be like! (8)

19 See 16

20 Not out when he has what you owe the landlord! It's just built in! (8)

22 Deposit, oddly enough, that's given as a "comeuppance." (3-4)

24 You might not get stuck with one on! (7)

25 As an afterthought, you're beginning to get on the pal of the guy of 18. (That's the spirit!) (6)

27 It may not be polite to do it, but that's the gist of things! (5)

28 The cockney's outburst to the American soldier might be "what a dog!" (5)

29 Part of the force might be associated with the "paddy" type. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3081

T	H	W	A	R	T	S		T	H	E	B	A	L	L
O		A		O		U		O		A		G		U
W	A	S	O	V	E	R		W	E	S	T	E	R	N
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Photography by Celia Roberts
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